

# aGift from the Desert



The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse

J. K. ...  
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# Gift Desert

The Art, History and Culture of the  
Arabian Horse

By  
Sandra L. Olsen  
Cynthia Culbertson

Presented by the  
Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation

International Museum of the Horse  
Kentucky Horse Park

## Candlestick

Detail from page 2

Iran

13th -14th century

Brass, originally inlaid with silver

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Catalog #227

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God has gifted man with coursers of the highest breeding...  
and made horses the most beautiful means of riding,  
the beauty of pageants, the most splendid gifts,  
and the most desirable possessions...

From a seventeenth century manuscript on the subject of Arabian horses  
by Shaykh Muhammad al-Bakhshi al-Halabi

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## ForeWord

The history of mankind changed forever with the domestication of the horse and from this moment onward, horses and horsemanship played an essential role in the advancement of civilization. Of all the horse breeds developed in the ensuing centuries the Arabian is the oldest and most influential, and these magnificent horses are one of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's greatest cultural treasures. Prehistoric rock art in our country attests to the honored role of the horse in our earliest history, and the artists of ancient Arabian kingdoms portrayed these horses in their colorful frescoes. In later centuries, the lyrical verses of our greatest poets immortalized the courage and loyalty of their Arabian steeds, and generations of our horsemen carefully guarded the breed's purity.

The Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, bequeathed to all Muslims a tradition of respect and admiration for the horse, and the principles of *furusiyah*, or horsemanship, are closely associated with such noble values as honor, generosity, and chivalry. Many elements of our heritage and culture are inextricably linked to the horse, and there is no finer example than the founder of our country, King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, who was the last leader in history to unite a country on horseback.

We are honored and proud of our partnership with the International Museum of the Horse in presenting this exceptional exhibition. Together we invite you to share in our love and appreciation for the Arabian horse – *the Gift from the Desert* whose nobility and beauty have transcended cultural barriers to touch the hearts of so many people around the world.

Faissal bin Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Saud  
Honorary President of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation  
Chairman of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Fund

Throughout history, the partnership between a horse and rider has always reflected the importance of trust and respect. A similar relationship exists between people of many nations who share an appreciation of the horse. It is our fondest hope that this exhibition will also strengthen these bonds and enhance our understanding of the diverse countries and cultures which treasure the horse.

The Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation is committed to upholding our country's traditions of horsemanship, and an important part of our vision is education about the important historical role of horses and horsemanship. We are honored that *A Gift from the Desert* will extend this vision to the many visitors who will experience this historic exhibition. As the homeland of the Arabian horse, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all of the institutions and individuals around the world who contributed to making this dream a reality.

Nawaf bin Faisal bin Fahad al-Saud  
President of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation

Dear Friends:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the world-exclusive exhibition, *A Gift from the Desert: The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse*. In a landmark year for the Kentucky Horse Park as it prepares to host the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, this display is yet another example of our continuing efforts to increase educational opportunities for our citizens and for visitors from around the world. It is indeed appropriate that this outstanding presentation, which will rank as one of the most significant international cultural events in Kentucky's history, is being held at one of our state's finest facilities, the Kentucky Horse Park.

This third, self-produced, international exhibition of the decade is the latest example of our Horse Park museum's commitment to its mission of celebrating Kentucky's historic association with the horse. The Kentucky Horse Park Commission and Foundation, the Horse Park staff, and all involved in this undertaking are to be congratulated for a remarkable achievement.

Like Kentucky, the Near East - and in particular the Arabian Peninsula - has long been associated with their horses. These wonderful animals who have given us so much also provide a common thread which can transcend political, religious and cultural differences. This has again proven true as the ties made through the *A Gift from the Desert* exhibition have led to closer relations with our Saudi Arabian sponsors and with countless entities and individuals throughout the Middle East.

While you are in Kentucky, I would encourage you to visit some our other wonderful attractions. From our beautiful mountains in the East to our incredible lakes in the West, we think that you will agree that Kentucky is a land of unmatched beauty and unsurpassed hospitality.

Steven L. Beshear  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Kentucky

On behalf of the staff and the wonderful army of volunteers at the Kentucky Horse Park, we are pleased and honored to welcome you to the world exclusive presentation of *A Gift from the Desert: The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse*. This exhibition is without question the quintessential, definitive work about the critical role that the horse played in the development of the Middle East and, consequently, the great number of countries and cultures, including our own, that have been influenced by the Arabian breed.

It is certainly appropriate that this magnificent exhibition is being held in the year that the Kentucky Horse Park hosts the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games. Since 1978, the Park has served the noble cause of celebrating humanity's grand and eternal bond with the horse. *A Gift from the Desert* represents our third major international exhibition following the most successful and highly acclaimed *Imperial China* exhibit in 2000 and *All the Queen's Horses* in 2003. We are pleased to continue to find new and creative ways to fulfill the Kentucky Horse Park's mission and to express our undying devotion to the horse. Be assured that the Kentucky Horse Park in the years ahead will continue, in many different forms and fashions, to validate Lexington's well-earned reputation as the Horse Capital of the World.

While attending the exhibition, we certainly hope you will visit all of the Horse Park attractions. We are confident that you will find them enjoyable, entertaining and enlightening. The Kentucky Horse Park is 1,224 acres dedicated to mankind's love of the horse and we are proud to welcome you to our showplace.

John Nicholson  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Horse Park

## Preface and Acknowledgements

Within a month after the Kentucky Horse Park was awarded the 2010 World Equestrian Games in 2006, the International Museum of the Horse committed to produce its third major international exhibition. The history of the horse in the Near East, and in particular the Arabian horse, emerged at the top of our list of possible subjects for a number of reasons.

More than any geographic region on earth, the Near East has had the greatest influence on our daily lives.

The Near East was the cradle of civilization and had a greater influence on world history than any other geographic area on earth.

With the possible exception of the Eurasian Steppes, no other location on earth has had as significant an impact on human/equine history as these ancient lands.

The horse has had the greatest impact on human civilization of any animal. No horse has had as great of effect on the history of light horse breeds as has the Arabian breed.

Over the past three years our search for art, artifacts, knowledge and inspiration led us from Riyadh, Cairo, Doha, Sharjah, Paris, London, Karlsruhe and Berlin and to New Orleans, West Virginia, Missouri, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York and Boston - all in search of museums and private lenders who shared the vision of our quest. Throughout this process the horse, in this case the Arabian horse, has yet again proved to be a unifying force across cultural, religious, linguistic and political barriers, as we shared our common love for these most uncommon creatures.

An exhibition of this scope and complexity would not be possible without the hard work, support and cooperation of countless institutions, organizations and individuals in the United States, Europe and the Middle East. First and foremost I would like to extend my special thanks to the President of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation, HRH Prince Nawaf bin Faisal bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz for his kind sponsorship and sharing our vision to bring this exhibition to fruition.

Thanks also to HRH Prince Turki al-Faisal al-Saud, former Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States, and HH Prince Faissal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed for their invaluable contribution in making the exhibition a reality.

In addition I would like to make a special note of thanks to the current Saudi Ambassador HE Adel A. al-Jubeir; the Secretary General of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation and Director General of the King Abdul Aziz Arabian Horse Center, Dirab, Sami Suleiman al-Nohait; and the Senior Advisor to the Ambassador Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Naila al-Sowayel for their three years of enduring practical assistance. These thanks also extend to all the staff at the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation and the King Abdul

Aziz Arabian Horse Center in Dirab who have worked so hard behind the scenes.

It has been my distinct pleasure to work with two wonderful guest curators, Dr. Sandra Olsen and Ms. Cynthia Culbertson, since the exhibition's inception. Their keen minds, intellectual curiosity and unrelenting research place their indelible stamp on the exhibition and this catalog, and from them I have learned so much.

Prior to gaining the support of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation, a group of very special people within the American Arabian horse community stepped up to provide substantial seed funds that allowed the exhibition to move forward. They deserve special credit since the *A Gift from the Desert* project was at that time no more than a dream. Among this wonderful group of supporters, four in particular stand out for championing our cause within the Arabian horse world - the grand dame of Arabian horse historians, Judith Forbis, Henry and Christie Metz and Cynthia Culbertson.

Over the three years it has taken to develop the exhibition, we have received assistance in various forms from more people than we could possibly acknowledge. The following represent a few of these who have helped to make the exhibition possible: Professor Tadeusz Majda; Dr. Majeed Khan; Dr. Saad bin Abdulaziz al- Rashid; Darryl Larson; Deborah Harding; Michelle Mannering; Steve Pigott; Debra Anderson; Tona Macken; Steve Duffy; Peter Raulwing; Guy Rhodes; Bruce McCrea; Richard T. Bryant; Gigi Grasso; Stuart Vesty; Josh Cannon and Buryl Thompson with the Kentucky Department of Insurance.

Few people have the privilege of working with a staff as professional, dedicated, creative, and resourceful as I have been. While small in number, this team has once again accepted the tremendous task and additional burdens inherent in the production of a major international exhibition. As such, to Gina Gibson, Travis Robinson, Jim Shambhu, Mary Callahan, Jenifer Stermer, Claire Pope, Jamie Watkins, Kelly Kahmann, Katherine Wilson and Shannon Leva goes my sincere respect and gratitude.

Last but certainly not least I would like to extend my special thanks to Kentucky Horse Park Executive Director, John Nicholson and Deputy Director, Lindsey Flora. Despite the tremendous demands they have faced as the Park prepares to host the 2010 Alltech® FEI World Equestrian Games, their support for this exhibition has been constant. It is my true pleasure to work for people of such leadership and vision.

Bill Cooke  
Director  
International Museum of the Horse  
Kentucky Horse Park

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**Rearing Bronze Horse Figurine**

Qaryat al-Fau, south-central Saudi Arabia  
circa 200

Bronze

King Saud University Museum  
Catalog #134

# A Gift FROM THE Desert

## The Art, History & Culture of the Arabian Horse

### INTRODUCTION

CYNTHIA CULBERTSON  
SANDRA L. OLSEN

Horses, to the Arabs, were the most significant thing in life; they were the symbol of their erected fortresses, their everlasting treasures, their finest glory, and their surest way of defense. As such, the Arabs took great interest in horses, and excelled in their knowledge about these animals more than all other nations...

MAHMUD SHUKRI AL-ALUSI FROM HIS BOOK  
*BULUGH AL-'ARAB FI MA'RIFAT AHWAL AL-'ARAB*

With powerful strides and a lofty gaze, the Arabian horse galloped forth from the deserts of the Near East to change the course of equestrian history. The story of this magnificent breed reaches far into antiquity and is filled with poetry, art, romantic legends, and grand historical figures. It is a tale that extends across diverse civilizations and cultures through some of the most fascinating epochs in the annals of humankind. Beginning with the Bedouin tribes of the Near East, an unbroken chain of passionate breeders has treasured the Arabian horse, carefully guarding its purity and ensuring that its legacy has continued to the present day.

Two millennia after the taming and domestication of the first horses, the Arabian appeared, becoming one of the oldest recognizable breeds in ancient art and the archeological record. The ancestors of the Arabian breed traveled an arduous and winding path, making their way from the Eurasian steppes of Ukraine, Russia, or Kazakhstan, down through the Near East, over to Egypt, and into the Arabian Peninsula from which they take their name. Along that journey these horses developed the unique features of the modern Arabian, becoming an animal that could surmount great obstacles while still retaining its characteristic elegance and beauty.

From the earliest history of the breed, Arabians were valued for their endurance, brilliant performance in warfare, and elite status among horses. The Arabian's importance to chariot warfare is one example. Written texts from 3,500 years ago shed light on the training of chariot horses, which were expected to endure sweltering heat under great duress and physical exertion. The Arabian horse passed these tests and not only survived but thrived. The development of this breed for chariot warfare, along with the invention of the chariot itself, altered human history and geopolitics. More than one great conqueror owed his empire to the stamina and courage of these remarkable animals.



Arabian horses have long been associated with royalty, whose members adorned them with a wide array of decorative headdresses, breast ornaments, and other elaborate embellishments to symbolize the horses' worth. The Arabian was often depicted in art, particularly in ancient Egypt, pulling the chariot of the king in ceremonial processions, in hunts, and in battle. By the time the chariot was supplanted by cavalry, the Arabian horse had already mastered the hot, arid climates of its homelands and had been transformed into an agile, adept mount whose superior qualities made it ideal for this new type of warfare.

From Egyptian pharaohs, to desert warriors, to the age of mechanization, the value of the Arabian horse to humankind has been determined by a combination of factors that may be arranged in four broad categories: physical attributes, genetic strength, character, and distinctive appearance and bearing.

## Physical Characteristics

The development of the Arabian breed largely occurred in areas of the Near East and the Arabian Peninsula that were not ideal for equine habitation. Water was scarce, and forage was seasonal, which meant these horses had to be exceptionally hardy, often surviving on a sparse and varied diet, including such non-typical fodder as dates, camel's milk, and occasionally meat. K.W. Ammon, in his book *Historical Reports on Arab Horse Breeding*, relates the observations of the seventeenth century French traveler Jean de Thévenot, "When the bedouins wander through the desert and run out of forage, they may feed their horses camel's milk, butter, cheese and sun-dried camel's meat." In the same book Ammon cites the eighteenth century observations of L. De Grendpre, "It is unbelievable how little nourishment the horses here manage on and remain healthy and spirited."

Arabian horses exhibit a wide range of adaptations to the desert, including thinner skin than other breeds and tails held high when in motion, both advantageous traits in cooling the body. The pigment of their skin is black, lending protection against the harsh desert sun, and their hooves are flinty and round, enabling them to traverse the sandy and rock-strewn ground of their homelands. Known for their exceptional speed and agility, their bones, while delicate in appearance, are particularly dense and strong.

The most important physical characteristic of the Arabian breed is stamina. "There is no doubt that the pure bred Arabian possesses extraordinary powers of endurance," wrote Lady Anne Blunt, famed nineteenth century Arabian horse breeder and the first Western woman to travel to Arabia. "On a journey he may be ridden day after day... Yet he does not lose heart or condition, and is always ready to gallop at the end of the longest march." There are countless examples of Arabian horses going vast distances with little food or water, often carrying nearly one-third of their own weight. Several conformational attributes account for this unrivaled stamina. The nostrils of Arabian horses are large and flexible, enabling them to take in great quantities of air while galloping. They have an especially wide space between the jowls, allowing for a large windpipe, as well as a particular attachment of the neck to the head, called the *mitbah*, which gives them a free flow of air. Their chests are deep and broad, and their ribs are well-sprung, providing tremendous lung capacity. Short and strong backs are another characteristic of the breed, and Arabian horses often have five lumbar vertebrae instead of the six or seven more common in other equines. Modern science has determined that the Arabian breed possesses an abundance of slow-twitch muscle fibers in contrast to the fast-twitch fibers found in many other breeds. This characteristic makes Arabians capable of using oxygen more efficiently, enabling them to sustain speed over great distances.

While the stamina of the Arabian horse was always known to the Arabs, the



Europeans were astounded by these small and agile horses when they first encountered them during the Crusades. Tales of their incredible endurance were passed down through the centuries, even appearing in the fiction of Sir Walter Scott who wrote of the superiority of Arabian horses over those of the Frankish knights:

How the horses of yonder dog Templars must have snorted and blown, when they had toiled fetlock deep in the desert for one-twentieth part of the space which these brave steeds have left behind them, without one thick pant, or a drop of moisture upon their sleek and velvet coats!

This stamina has persisted over the centuries, even when these horses have been bred outside of their original desert environment. In the modern sport of endurance racing, where horses compete over distances of more than 100 kilometers in a single day, the Arabian horse is consistently victorious. Endurance riders around the world have learned that the formula for success in this demanding sport includes riding a horse of pure or predominately Arabian bloodlines.

#### Three Galloping Horses

Iran

Safavid, c.1550

Watercolor on paper

W: 22.0 cm (sheet), H: 13.7 cm  
(sheet), W: 13.2 cm (image), H: 10.1  
cm (image)

The British Museum

BM 1930,0607.0.10

Catalog # 245

## Genetic Strength

Genetic dominance is another factor that has contributed to the popularity of the Arabian horse throughout history. The original population was geographically isolated and relatively small in numbers, and because of the challenging environment only the strongest horses survived. Their Bedouin breeders were also relentless in ensuring that outside blood was not introduced. It is likely, therefore, that the earliest breeding groups of Arabian horses were closely related, and this meant that the horses that bred on had especially dominant genetic traits. W.R. Brown, in his book *The Horse of the Desert*, observed:

Arabian horses, when joined with other breeds ... are prepotent to a marked degree, and strongly stamp all their get with their qualities. For centuries, intelligent breeders have acknowledged this fact, and many authorities have given it as their opinion that no breed of horses has been created in historical times, able to propagate without rapid loss of its good qualities, that did not start with a liberal admixture of Arabian blood.

As the Arabian spread beyond the Near East, horse breeders observed a striking improvement in their herds when local horses were crossed with an Arabian stallion. Numerous expeditions were mounted to obtain horses from the desert, and the exceptional military value of the breed was soon recognized by the cavalries of almost all of the countries in Europe. The royal stud of a Polish king reported the breeding of purebred Arabians in the 1500's, and as early as 1657 Oliver Cromwell requested Arabian horses for England. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, numerous studs had been established by European kings and nobles to perpetuate the breeding of purebred Arabians. Carlo Guarmani, an Italian horseman who traveled throughout the Near East in the nineteenth century, made an extensive study of the Arabian and concluded, "The Arabian stallion alone is able to improve all breeds of horse around the world, just as he remains the only preserver of his own, Arabian breed, the original breed."

## Character

Known for intelligence, courage, loyalty and spirited yet gentle disposition, the most significant aspect of the Arabian horse's character is its affinity for humans. Because the breed was developed in lands with only sporadic grazing available, these horses rarely roamed freely in herds and were instead raised in close proximity to people. In his book *The Arab of the Desert*, H.R.P. Dickson described the remarkable relationship between the Bedouin and their horses:

This making the mare a member of the family has a most delightfully humanising effect on Arab horseflesh generally. It is charming to see the way mares enter the tent for shelter of a night when it is cold, or walk into the women's quarters in the midday heat of an Arabian summer to escape the stinging rays of a fierce sun. No one says them nay. They take possession as of right, and they are welcomed, given some dates or a drink of water as a matter of course. This sort of treatment develops a strange gentleness towards those women who are always handling them, and especially towards the tent children. Indeed, every mare seems to understand that the little ones are the children of her protectors, and treats them gently and with as much care, as if they were her own.

Handled from the moment of their birth, Arabian horses related to their Bedouin caretakers as if they were members of the horses' own herd. This trait was particularly useful in times of war or raiding because a mare often defended her rider just as she would have defended her own foal or another member of her herd. Over centuries of breeding by the Bedouin, horses that did not possess an ideal disposition were eliminated from the breeding population. Thus, the Arabian's unique character has become a genetic component of the breed. Lady Anne Blunt, who observed these horses both in the desert and in her own breeding program, testified to this attribute when she wrote:

In disposition the Arabians are gentle and affectionate, familiar indeed almost to the extent of being troublesome. They have no fear of man whatsoever, and will allow anyone to come up to them when grazing and take them by the head. If they happen to be lying down, they will not move though you come close to them... This extreme gentleness and courage, though partly the effect of education, is also inherited, for a colt born and brought up in the stable is just as tame.

## Beauty and Nobility

An appreciation of beauty has long been an integral part of the human psyche, and the Arabian horse is widely thought to be the most beautiful of horses. The celebrated pre-Islamic poet Imru al-Qais once wrote of an Arabian stallion, "The eye could scarcely realise his beauty. For, when gazing at one part, the eye was drawn away by the perfection of another part." The beauty of the Arabian horse must be acknowledged as one of the foremost elements in contributing to the longevity of the breed, attracting the eyes of generations of horsemen and artists.

Nobility of spirit is also a hallmark of the Arabian breed. The poet Al Mutannabi said of these horses, "If you have seen nothing but the beauty of their markings and limbs, their true beauty is hidden from you." The etymology of the Arabic word for horse, *khayl*, meaning "to walk with pride," suggests that Arabians possessed a noble bearing from the earliest times. The sight of a prancing Arabian horse, neck arched and head held high, exhibiting a distinct sense of self in its gaze, clearly speaks to the human observer, who often feels an almost spiritual connection with the animal. An appreciation for this manifestation of nobility is reflected in both art and literature depicting the breed. The Arabian horse, like no other, has transcended its utility to become a symbol of virtues highly regarded by man: grace, dignity, courage, loyalty, and pride. Indeed, it is perhaps the "true beauty" of which Al Mutannabi spoke that has made the Arabian the most treasured horse in human history.

(Fig. 1) Excavations at the site of Hasanlu, Iran.

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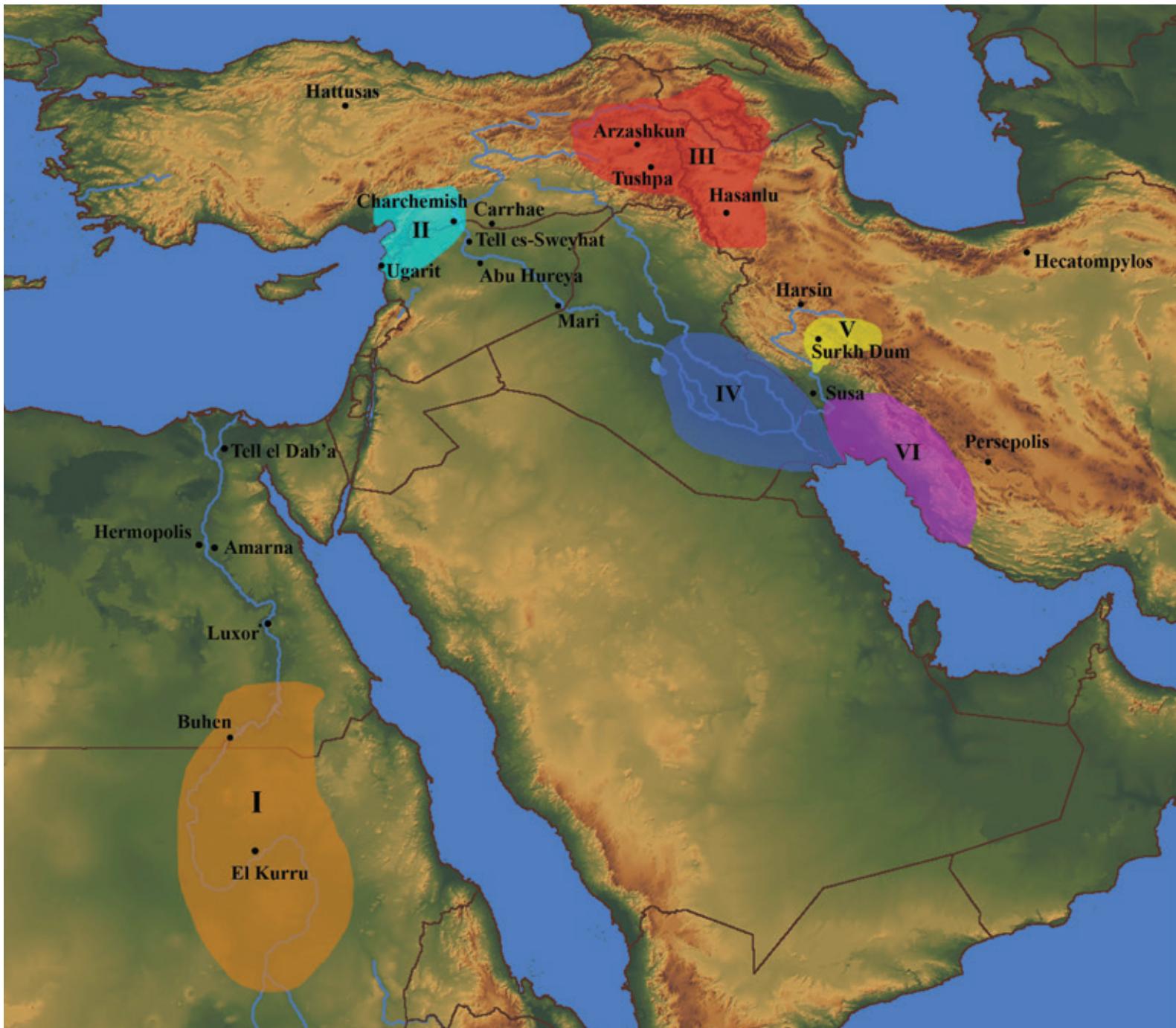


PART ONE

# The Horse in the Ancient Near East, Egypt and Arabia

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CHAPTER 1

(Map 1)  
**The Near East and Egypt**  
 I-Kushite Empire  
 II-Neo-Hittite Empire  
 III-Urartian Empire  
 IV-Sumerian Empire  
 V-Luristan Region  
 VI-Elamite Empire

# The Horse's Debut in the Near East

## The Prelude to the Arabian Horse's Story

The ancient wild horse once had a vast range, living over much of the Old and New Worlds during the Ice Age. By 10000 BCE, however, its zenith had passed and its numbers plummeted due to significant global warming. Now extinct in the New World, it also vanished from much of Europe and Asia. Only tiny pockets of wild horses survived outside the Eurasian steppe, a narrow strip of plains that ran from Hungary to Mongolia. Heading for extinction, the tarpan, or wild European horse, was captured, tamed and eventually domesticated on the steppes of Russia, Ukraine or Kazakhstan. By 3500 BCE, domestic horses were being bred, kept in corrals, and even milked in that region. By around 3000 BCE, they started to reappear in areas where they once lived millennia before, including the Near East.

One of the oldest pieces of evidence for horses in the Near East, is a single bone from the site of Abu Hureyra, in northern Syria, dated to between 7400-5000 BCE (Map 1). Horse remains were also found in the later site of Tappeh Zageh (5000 BCE), in north-central Iran. Because of their early dates, these remains are both considered to have come from small relict populations of wild horses.

Horses that were probably domesticated make their first appearance in Anatolia, Turkey, in the late Copper Age about 3300 BCE. Their skeletal remains have also been found in Copper and Early Bronze Age contexts in several sites in the southern Levant. In Mesopotamia, domesticated horses arrive about 2500 BCE, and appear about 500 years later in southern Iran.

An early representation of a Near Eastern domesticated horse is a small, green clay figurine of a stallion, found as a grave good in the cemetery at Tell al-Sweyhat (Map 1), in northern Syria. Dating to 2300-2200 BCE, two features on it indicate that it was domesticated: a small hole in its muzzle that must have held a bridle, and its long, flowing mane. Several model chariots were also found at Sweyhat, but donkeys could have been used to pull such vehicles in real life.



(Map 2) Detailed map of Mesopotamia showing key archaeological sites.

## Mesopotamia: The Land Between the Rivers

Farming and herding began in the hills of the Near East, but, by 5500-4000 BCE, the people moved down into the marshland between two major rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. The Greeks called this region *Mesopotamia*, “the land between the rivers,” for that triangular land north of modern Baghdad, Iraq that stretches up to the mountains of Armenia (Map 2).

The soil in Mesopotamia was incredibly rich and the rivers full, but rainfall alone could not support the fields without the aid of irrigation systems. Each spring, with the annual floods, these networks of canals were at great risk. Partly because of a growing bureaucracy to control the irrigation networks, the Mesopotamians built ever-larger settlements, including the city of Uruk on the Euphrates, and Susa on the Shaur river (Map 2).

Surprisingly, Mesopotamia is deficient in natural resources, except for mud, reeds, and date palms. Timber, stone, metals, minerals and other materials had to be imported or acquired through conquest of neighboring lands. Lacking building stone, whole cities were constructed of mud brick and reeds.

### MESOPOTAMIAN CHRONOLOGY

Neolithic: 5000-4000 BCE

Early Bronze Age: 4000-2000 BCE

Middle-Late Bronze Age: 2000-1000 BCE

Iron Age: 1000 BCE-0 CE

## Sumer: The Cradle of Civilization

The Sumerian civilization (Map 1, IV) was centered between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in southern Mesopotamia, between 3500-2000 BCE. It is often credited with an impressive list of “firsts,” including cities, writing, irrigation systems, monarchies, bureaucracy, monumental buildings, a legal system, a calendar, mathematics, wheeled vehicles, potter’s wheels, as well as bronze, gold and silver metallurgy. The city of Ur (Map 2) was the seat of the Sumerian government and its capital three times.

## A Horse’s Tale: The Oldest Written Records of Horses

Like many inventions, writing had a simple beginning. Little markings on small clay objects appear in at least three regions - Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Pakistan. The earliest seem to be Sumerian clay tokens incised with a few symbols, found in the lower levels in the ruins of Uruk, during the Ubaid period, about 4500-4000 BCE. These have been interpreted as accounting devices that specify commodities



**(Fig. 2)** This more advanced Neo-Assyrian cuneiform tablet from Nineveh dates to the time of King Ashurbanipal, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It speaks to the longevity of this writing style, which continued on for three millennia, until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, when it finally disappeared altogether. During that time it went through numerous adaptations and was used by a wide array of cultures in the region.

BM 1882, 0323.1. Photo: The Trustees of the British Museum

**(Fig. 3)** Aerial photograph of the Royal Cemetery of Ur taken in 1930, showing excavations at the southeast corner of the Nanna temple complex (bottom of photograph).

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of exchange. This notation system continued to evolve at Uruk after 3800 BCE, but it was still not technically writing. Some symbols are obvious: a head of barley; a wavy line for water; and shapes of containers. Others are the names of individuals, or are numerical or abstract symbols, spaced randomly over the surface in no particular order. They served as receipts or records of goods, labor, distances, and so forth.

By 3100 BCE, Sumerian records at Uruk had evolved into cuneiform, wedge-shaped impressions made in soft clay tablets that hardened in the sun (Fig. 2). Unlike the earlier pictorial symbols on clay tokens from Uruk, cuneiform was a phonetic-based system of symbols. It was used in record-keeping, historical documentation, religious texts, and literature. In 1889-1900, excavations of the Sumerian literary capital, Nippur (Map 2) produced thousands of cuneiform writings.

Ancient Mesopotamian texts from Uruk, from 2900-2800 BCE, contain signs that clearly mean some kind of equid, but it is not clear if they distinguish among asses, onagers (wild Asian half-asses), and horses. In the Early Dynastic Period (2700-2400 BCE), the only term that appears is *anse*, which is interpreted merely as “equid.”

One of the earliest examples of written words that differentiate the equids appears in administrative texts from the Early Dynastic city of Ngirsu (or Girsu) (Map 2), known today as Telloh, Iraq. Sumerian texts from there, dated to 2500-2350 BCE, also mention the chariot, which they called *gigir*. Some 50,000 cuneiform tablets have been recovered from Ngirsu.

Texts from the Sumerian city of Ur (Fig. 3, 4), during the Third Dynasty (2150-2000 BCE), mention the horse specifically as *anshe-zi-zi*. In a literary hymn, King Shulgi (2093-2046 BCE), is likened to a horse for his quickness and agility. Another term for horse, *anshe libir*, was written in the Akkadian language and used in the northern city of Ashur (Map 2).

## The Royal Archives of Mari

The ancient metropolis of Mari (Map 1), in northern Syria, started perhaps as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium and flourished between 2900-1760 BCE. On the banks of the Euphrates, it was an ancient Sumerian city-state and the capital of the Amorites from 2000 until its demise.

An enormous palace in Mari occupied by its ruler in the final years had over 600 rooms and covered some 2.4 hectares (6 acres). An amazing archive of at least 15,000 tablets reveals much about the society, economy, religion, and legal system. Tablets from the time of Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad I (1813-1781 BCE), who annexed the city state of Mari, discuss military equestrianism. Mari was known for its expertise in the manufacture of chariots. The armies of Mari hitched not only horses, but also donkeys and mules to their chariots.

Couriers usually traveled on donkeys, but the earliest written evidence for horseback riding is from Mari. The Mari king Zimri-Lim (1779-1761 BCE) was advised to travel by chariot or ride a mule, rather than the riskier horse.

Mari texts indicate the scarcity and value of a horse, quoting it as being worth 30 slaves, 500 sheep, or 5 minas of silver. The Mari tablets frequently mention that King Aplahanda of Carchemish (Map 1), who was an important horse trader, benefited from his ideal location between Anatolia and





(Fig. 4) Photograph at the Sumerian site of Ur showing work at Pit X in 1933-34. Leonard Woolley's excavations at this sounding alone required removing more than 13,000 cubic meters of soil.

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Mesopotamia. Aplahanda had good relations not only with the Mari kings, but also with Hammurabi of Babylon (Map 2). According to one Mari tablet, King Zimri-Lim requested white temple horses from Aplahanda, but was told that only bays were available.

Another Mari tablet that dealt with travel and commerce covered the conditions of a wagon rental, saying it should not be driven to the Mediterranean Sea. Still another described the sacrifice of a young ass as a traditional ritual associated with sealing a treaty or entering into a covenant.

Hammurabi of Babylon conquered Mari in 1760 BCE and incorporated it into his kingdom, making King Zimri-Lim a vassal.

## First to Ride in the Near East

Evidence suggests that horses were ridden in the Eurasian steppe soon after they were domesticated in the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. Because the people who introduced the horse came from the north, they had many centuries of knowledge about the horse. It is not surprising, therefore, that those cultures appear to have had a greater ease with horses and retained better skills at breeding, training, and riding them.

Near Eastern cultures, on the other hand, were slow to develop familiarity with this foreign beast and long eschewed riding, giving preference to wheeled conveyances instead. Written Sumerian and Akkadian texts record that horses were received from foreigners through trade or booty and may have been bred with donkeys to produce mules, as an alternative to hybrid donkey/onagers. Among the Sumerians, horses were still not used for significant transportation or warfare and were probably considered a novelty.

Early artistic representations from this region frequently indicate that the first local people to mount horses were quite awkward. There are plentiful examples of terra cotta figurines in which the rider is sitting directly over the withers, clutching the neck of the horse in an untenable position for travel, especially at high speeds.

However, one of the earliest and finest representations of horseback riding in the Near East is remarkable in its elegance. This tiny Sumerian seal impression on a clay tablet from Sumerian Dynasty III, clearly depicts a man seated properly on a horse (Cat. #5). Dr. David Owen has studied the seal impression in detail and determined that it does not represent a donkey or onager because the animal clearly has a long, lush tail, short ears, long neck, and a flowing mane.

The tablet comes from a group of twenty found at Drehem, 10 km south of Nippur (Map 2) in the archive of Abbakalla the scribe, son of Lu-Ningirsu. None of the others is as complete as this particular one. Given that most of the texts in the archive focused on animals, it is clear that Abbakalla was a bureaucrat who disbursed livestock.

Of comparable age and origin, the beautiful gold headband or fillet from a woman's grave at the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Cat. #4) shows a man riding an animal, but the head of the beast resembles a calf more than a horse.

## Horse, Ass, Onager or Mule—Reading Ancient Art

In the Near East, there are multiple equids present from the early third millennium BCE onward. The donkey probably entered the Near East soon after being domesticated in Egypt, around 3000 BCE. The wild onager was indigenous to the Near East and Central Asia, so its presence preceded all the others. While there is no evidence that the onager was ever domesticated, ancient texts indicate that it was bred with the domestic donkey to produce a hybrid. The horse was a relative latecomer to areas south of modern Turkey. Having originated much farther north, it was initially poorly suited to the hot climate of the Near East. On the other hand, the donkey, having descended from the African wild ass of the Egyptian desert, thrived in its new home. Today, the donkey continues to be more prevalent than the horse in this region.

If we are to employ artistic representations to draw conclusions about the uses of the various equids through time, it is important to identify distinguishing characteristics for each of the equids. A donkey, for example, has relatively large ears, an erect mane, a fairly blunt muzzle, a short body, and short legs. The tail is tasseled, with long hairs only starting at its midpoint and running to its terminus.

The onager is very similar to the donkey, apart from its legs being somewhat longer, so it is extremely difficult to distinguish the two in art. The best clue that the animal is a donkey is to look for indications of domestication, such as a bridle, harness and vehicle, rider, etc. However, this will not eliminate the possibility of the animal being a hybrid. Wild onagers are most likely depicted in the famous hunting scene of Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (669-631 BCE) in his North Palace at Nineveh in which they are the prey.

A domestic horse, in contrast, has smaller ears, a longer muzzle, a forelock and flowing mane, longer legs, and a tail with long hair starting at the dock. Of course, the horse's mane and tail can always be cropped, tied or braided, but if they are shown long, then they are useful in identifying the figure as a domestic horse. Wild horses, whether the European Tarpan or the Asiatic Przewalski horse, donned erect manes, like the asses and onagers.

Mules and hinnies are extremely rare in ancient art, but not unknown (Fig. 5). The mule (offspring of a mare and a jack) has a head, ears, mane and tail that resemble the donkey, but a body size resembling the mare that produced it. The hinnie (offspring of a jennie and a stallion) is the reverse, with a head, mane and tail more akin to the horse and generally a smaller body reflecting the size of its mother. The hinnie's ears are intermediate between those of a donkey and a horse.

Whether it is possible to determine which equid is represented depends upon the artist's wish to express the appropriate features and the quality of the production. Many terra cotta figurines, for example, simply lack the necessary definition to allow scholars to identify the species depicted. In such cases, it is prudent to simply refer to the animal as an equid.

## Wheels of Change

Because the oldest artistic depiction of a wheel was found in Mesopotamia, and dates to around 3500 BCE, many archaeologists believe that the wheel was first invented there. Like most inventions, the wheel developed through a series of stages, which can be reconstructed, with the aid of ancient clay models.

*Stage 1.* Sledges, loaded with goods or people, were dragged by animals. The earliest sledges date to 7000 BCE in the near-Arctic of northern Europe. Pottery models of sledges appear in South Russia about 4000 BCE.

Sledges emerge in pictographic writing in Mesopotamia by the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, where they became the preferred means of transporting people of status. An engraving on one stone plaque shows a royal person or a deity on a sledge drawn by oxen. By the mid third millennium, Sumerian Early Dynastic Queen Puabi was buried with an actual sledge and a pair of oxen in her tomb in the Royal Cemetery of Ur.

*Stage 2.* A series of rollers was placed under the sledge to help it roll over the ground. Pictographs of rollers date to the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE.

*Stage 3.* The blades of the sledge eventually wore grooves in the rollers. The smaller diameter of the rollers where they touched the sledge made them more energy efficient.



(Fig. 5) Assyrian depiction of a probable mule, at Nineveh. Louvre Museum, Paris.

Photo by Sandra L. Olsen

*Stage 4.* Workers cut out the wood between the grooves to reduce drag, thereby creating an axle, with the larger diameter outer parts acting as wheels. Wooden pegs kept the sledge on the axle, while allowing the axle freedom to turn.

*Stage 5.* The axle and wheels were made from separate pieces, with the wheels being solid disks or tripartite. These are also depicted in the earliest pictographs, from the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, at Uruk. With the fixed axle, the axle is solidly connected to the cart frame and only the wheels revolve. This configuration greatly improved the stability of carts and allowed them to turn corners more smoothly.

## War-carts and Wagons

There are three kinds of evidence for wheeled vehicles in the Near East: the actual remains of the vehicles; artistic depictions; and texts describing their use. The archaeological remains of actual vehicles are sparse and poorly preserved, but examples have been found at the cities of Kish, Ur, and Susa (Map 2).

Heavy wagons with four disk wheels were drawn by teams of oxen or donkeys by 3000 BCE. More than a dozen large copper models of ox-wagons were looted from sites in Anatolia, Turkey. Like their precursor, the sledge, wagons became an important prestige item included in high status burials. The earliest evidence for covered wagons dates to around 2500BC, based on clay models. Two-wheeled carts with disk wheels came along soon after.

Horse-drawn vehicles of lighter weight do not appear until around 1950-1750 BCE, when remains of pairs of horses and vehicles with two spoked wheels, probably chariots, are found in graves in Russia and Kazakhstan.

## The Standard of Ur: The First War Machine

The Sumerian *Standard of Ur* (Cat. #1), dating to circa 2600-2450 BCE, shows heavy battle wagons, each with a large two-man cab and four solid disk wheels, pulled by pairs of donkeys. Standing inside are two men, a driver and a warrior equipped with an axe and a spear. A tall defensive barrier is at the front of the cab, with a quiver attached to it. The harnesses on the asses have a large rein ring. These heavy vehicles were the precursors of the chariot and must have been considerably slower, both because of their weight and the equids pulling them.

## The Chariot: Military Vehicle, Royal Conveyance and Race Car

The chariot may be defined as a small, lightweight vehicle with two spoked wheels. They were pulled by large animals, most often two or four horses, and held from one to four persons. Chariots had an enormous geographic distribution; examples have been found from Britain to eastern China and from Sweden to India. In addition, this versatile vehicle was employed in one fashion or another for more than two millennia. Among the variety of functions served by the chariot are mobile battle platform, transportation for elites during both their mortal lives and in the Afterlife, royal conveyance for triumphal processions and religious festivals, and sporting vehicle on the racetrack.

Perhaps the earliest physical evidence for chariots occurs in Russia and Kazakhstan, where vehicles with two spoked wheels were interred with warriors in subterranean tombs, or kurgans, in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. The Hittites, whose origin may have been north of the Black Sea, brought the chariot to the forefront in the Near East.

The chariot's dominance in warfare spanned from about 1500 BCE until 900 BCE, when cavalries gradually began to rise in importance. However, they continued to be used as mobile firing platforms for archers until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and on the racetrack much later, into Byzantine times. The Greek hippodrome and Roman and Byzantine circus were tracks used primarily for horse and chariot racing.

The chief areas where the horse and chariot were used militarily include Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Iran. This began with small numbers of chariots accompanying infantrymen. Through time, the numbers of chariots fielded increased to thousands in a given battle. However, chariot warfare was successful only on open plains. When mountains had to be crossed, the chariots had to be lifted up by ropes while the soldiers walked. The lightest chariots could be carried by a single man on his shoulder.

One of the last significant confrontations involving chariots occurred in 331 BCE, when Darius III was defeated by Alexander the Great at the Battle of Gaugamela (probably near Mosul, northern Iraq). Alexander's army simply opened their lines and when the Persian chariotry entered, the Macedonians attacked from the rear. Alexander's victory ended the Achaemenid Empire and established the vulnerability of chariot warfare.

## Training and Caring for Warhorses

Around 1400 BCE, a Mitannian master horse trainer named Kikkuli wrote texts (Cat. #22) for training chariot horses for combat, at the Hittite capital, Hattusa (Map 3). The Mittannians were highly accomplished horsemen, so his training methods enabled the Hittite charioeteers to conquer lands from Turkey to Syria, Lebanon, and Northern Iraq. The *Manual of Kikkuli* and his *Training Texts* are written on tablets in Hittite, but it contains a number of loanwords from Mittanni, Luwian and Hurrian. The *Manual* and *Training Texts* are very similar, but the first is more comprehensive and provides a training schedule. Although Kikkuli never directly states that the training is for war, because even chariot races were considered preparation for battle, it is a reasonable assumption.

Kikkuli used two units of measure, the *iku* and the *danna*, in recording the distances horses were required to cover in a set period. It is understood that there are 100 *iku* to one *danna*, however, there is a debate among translators about the size of the *iku*. It has been variously interpreted to be as low as 15 meters to as high as 107 meters. Scholars also argue about whether terms for gaits refer to walk, trot, canter, and gallop (the normal gaits) or to other ones like a slow gait, faster rack, running walk, amble, etc.

The first few days were hard, designed to cull unfit horses. These were followed by a three-week period of rest, grazing, stable care, washing down, anointing with oil, and feeding. Then the training gradually escalated up to day 178. A track was used occasionally, but most of the training was on open ground.

During the training, feed and water were strictly controlled. Handfuls of grain (wheat, barley, groats, chaff, long hay and chopped straw) were given several times during the day and at night. On certain days fasting from both grain and water or only water was invoked. Salt and malt were sometimes added to the water to replenish the horse after excessive workouts. The horses were washed in either cold or warm water frequently and covered with a blanket afterward. At times they were anointed with oil, which would have replaced the natural oils of the skin lost with the recurrent baths.

The conditioning and daily regimes recommended by Kikkuli compare closely to those used by Three Day Eventers and endurance riders, except that some aspects are extreme to the point of cruelty. Incredibly, the Kikkuli program utilizes knowledge in sports medicine that has only been rediscovered in the last 30 years. These methods include: the principle of progression; peak loading systems; electrolyte replacement; interval training; and repetitions.

The Kikkuli manual had influence well beyond his era and the Hittite Empire. Middle Assyrian texts (Cat. #23) were patterned after his, but less severe. The Assyrians considerably shortened the distance and used a track designed for training.

## Urartu and Its Fancy Chariots

The Kingdom of Urartu (Map 1, III) (13<sup>th</sup> century-585 BCE) was located in the mountainous plateau between Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Caucasus mountains, later known as the Armenian Highland. Centered around Lake Van, its name corresponds to the Biblical Ararat.

The Nairi, a loose confederation of small kingdoms, in the 13-9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, were repeatedly attacked by the Assyrians. When the Nairi states united under King Aramu (860-843 BCE), Urartu became a powerful rival to Assyria. Assyrian King Shalmaneser III captured the Urartian capital of Arzashkun, but Urartian armies repaid the favor by encroaching deep into Assyrian territory and seizing control of Babylon (Map 2). The Urartian capital was moved to Tushpa in 832 BCE by King Sarduri I. Urartian ruler Argishti founded several cities, most notably Erebuni, in 782 BCE, which eventually became the modern Armenian capital of Yerevan.

At its height, the Urartu kingdom may have stretched north beyond the Aras River (Araxes in



(Map 3) Hittite Empire.

Greek) and Lake Sevan, encompassing present-day Armenia and even the southern part of Georgia almost to the shores of the Black Sea; west to the sources of the Euphrates; east to present-day Tabriz, Lake Urmia, and beyond; and south to the sources of the Tigris. This became the first known Armenian empire.

Alongside their cavalry and infantry, the Urartians employed chariots, pulled by large horses. Our information about them is not as detailed as for the Assyrians (see below), but there are some Urartian texts that inform about their military tactics. For example, they mention taking prisoners and deporting captured troops. At least according to their written word, the king led his troops into battle.

The many artifacts relating to warfare indicate that the Urartians employed skilled metallurgists. These talented craftsmen made a variety of types of horse tack and chariots that were quite ornate (Cat. #28-31). The horses were equipped with decorated bronze chamfrons, blinkers, and collars; the chariots had large bronze yoke standards. Every part of the chariot could be decoratively incised or embossed, even at times the lynchpins and hubcaps. In this attention to detail they were comparable with their contemporaries, the Assyrians.

## A Great Conflagration at Hasanlu

Iron Age Hasanlu (Map 1, Fig. 1) was the largest known settlement in the Solduz valley, in northwestern Iran. Although the town's occupation spanned from 1450-300 BCE, it is the period leading up to 800 BCE that is of greatest interest for our purposes. This citadel and surrounding habitation were prominently situated at the southwest corner of Lake Urmia, on a major trade route with Assyria and Syria to the west, Urartu to the north, and Media and Mannea to the southeast. However, it is not known with certainty with which major power Hasanlu was aligned. The number of finely made artifacts of precious metals, such as gold, silver and electrum, as well as ivory, high quality pottery, and other materials, indicate that an elite controlled Hasanlu.

On one fateful day at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, an outside force, very likely the Urartians, attacked. Large numbers of Hasanlu's inhabitants were massacred and many of its buildings were destroyed by fire. Not long after, the episode was repeated, killing the few remaining occupants and burning yet more buildings. Among the 246 bodies of the citizens found during excavations, some died in the conflagrations, but others received massive and repeated head injuries, perhaps from battle maces. Some individuals were found lying in their death positions, while others were interred. Battle weapons were strewn around, but the fact that stockpiles of armaments were still in storage suggests a surprise attack with little time for locals to prepare. Stables and tack rooms were burned, killing horses and ironically preserving their stored bridles, harnesses and other equipment under the collapsed structures.

Fragmentary ivory plaques and a silver and electrum beaker depict battle scenes that elucidate their military tactics and show that they utilized infantry, chariotry, and cavalry. The cavalry of Hasanlu wore bronze or leather helmets with ear protectors and crests, bronze shoulder guards, iron armor plates, and boots. The infantry wore belted kilts and helmets, but were barefoot or sandaled. They carried small shields and had quivers made of iron sheets. Weaponry included socketed spears, maces, swords, daggers, battleaxes, pikes, and bows and arrows. The cavalry primarily were lancers, the charioteers were archers and the infantry handled a variety of weapons.

The chariots held one man or two, with one a driver and the other an archer. The typical Hasanlu chariots apparently had wheels with six spokes, but one is depicted with just four. A pile of burned wood, including a six-spoked wheel and a long pole, is probably the remains of a chariot. Depictions of chariots and their horses show that the reins passed through rein rings and that a weighted pom-pom hung below the horse's chin, similar to Assyrian ones.

The horse tack found in burned stables and tack rooms at Hasanlu (Cat. #33, 34) constitutes the largest collection from one period and one site in the Near East. In addition to nine horse skeletons, 16 headstalls, a cluster of breastplates, pieces of harnesses, and two chamfrons were found. One box-shaped chamfron would have covered much of the horse's face, but another was nothing more than a narrow bronze strip that ran down the horse's nose. The straps of some bridles were covered with bronze buttons and had bronze strap dividers. Several crescent-shaped and lunate breastplates were found together, along with smaller crescents that probably rested on the horse's forehead. Large roundels were most likely shoulder medallions for chariot horses. Stone yoke pommels have been

found, but the leather harness saddles were not preserved. The bits are bronze or iron jointed snaffles usually with separate mouthpieces, but occasionally a cheekpiece and canon of the mouthpiece were united as one. Some canons were twisted to resemble rope, with a loop at one end to join with the other canon and another to receive the rein. Other canons were cast smooth and had one end threaded through a hole in the cheekpiece and a rein ring cast on that end. The cheekpieces were straight or curved rods with loops for the split ends of the bridle's cheek straps near either end. A variety of small bronze bells was found associated with horse gear, but it is not obvious how they were worn.

The collection of Hasanlu horse gear is unique in its scope and variety, but it compares closely with examples of actual pieces from Urartu and depictions in Assyrian art. Nonetheless, the Hasanlu tack reveals some local distinctions.

## The Rise of the Cavalry

While the infantry has played a key role throughout history, the effectiveness of the chariot eventually waned as horse archers became more plentiful and skilled. It is true that the chariot provided a better foundation than the back of a horse to stabilize the archer's aim, especially given that early riders had no stirrups and often no saddle. The chariot had an even greater advantage if the archer was accompanied by a driver, who could control the horses while the archer pivoted freely with both hands free to shoot. However, there was no overcoming the limitations of the chariot in rough terrain and inclement weather, when the wheels could get mired in mud. Horses were more maneuverable and cavalry more adept at combating foot soldiers. In addition, cavalries were more readily available in large numbers and more easily replaced in the field because the manufacture of chariots required special skilled craftsmen.

The earliest indications of cavalries can be found in the Nuzi Tablets, circa 1400 BCE, in which references are made to horses that are fully equipped and units of mounted, armed horsemen. Nuzi (Map 2) was a small town in the Hurrian Empire located near the modern city of Kirkuk, Iraq. Its palace and surrounding structures produced over 5000 tablets, mostly business and legal documents. From Ugarit (Map 1), an ancient port city on the Mediterranean Coast of northern Syria, a plaque dating to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE shows a line of horsemen, of whom at least one is armed. This has also been interpreted as a cavalry. It is in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, however, that cavalries really became a dominant force. Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE) implemented them to a large extent, but cavalries were also employed in the contemporaneous armies of Urartu, Babylon, Adini, Israel and Syria.

The jointed snaffle bit was an important innovation for cavalries that became increasingly more common around 900 BCE. The jointed mouthpiece, often made of twisted metal that resembled rope, facilitated the communication between the rider and his horse, which, in turn, greatly improved the success of mounted archers and cavalry armed with javelins. The saddle was also a significant addition to provide a more secure seat for the mounted archer. The oldest example was found in northwest China and dates to around 800-900 BCE, but it was adopted much later in the Near East. From artistic representations, the Assyrians and Persians primarily sat on saddlecloths held in place with girth straps. The Scythians on the Eurasian steppe had saddles with actual wooden inserts in pads stuffed with fur or grass by the 5<sup>th</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, and these accomplished equestrians are likely the source from which the Parthians obtained the saddle.

## The Distinctive Luristan Bronzes

Luristan (Map 1,V) is a region located on the west side of the Zagros Mountains, in west-central Iran, that has produced thousands of distinctive, ornate bronzes, including finials, standards, tubes, animal or human-headed pins, axe heads, horse bits and harnesses (Cat. #36-49), as well as silver sword handles, and various other objects dating to 1250-650 BCE. The fact that they are so recognizable as a group and so vibrant encouraged collecting on a grand scale once they began to be discovered around 1928. As a result, most of the artifacts were excavated by looters and sold by dealers to collectors, so scientific knowledge of the culture that made them is limited. Because of the way most of these objects have been obtained, it is also unclear that all "Luristan" bronzes were actually derived from this limited region. The few excavations that have been carried out have produced relatively few examples of

bronze objects of this style, with the exception of the settlement site of Surkh Dum (Map 1), in eastern Luristan. Surkh Dum, which was excavated by E. Schmidt in 1938, produced hundreds of bronzes.

Since these readily recognizable bronzes first began to appear, scholars have speculated who was responsible for making them. Various attributions have been presented, defended and attacked, including that they were Cimmerians, Elamites (Map 1, VI), Medes, and Kassites. It has also been claimed that they were nomadic peoples because at least some of their cemeteries seem to be isolated from any settlement. However, some settlements have been found, so perhaps the ancient Lurs were either semi-sedentary and practiced transhumance, moving their herds up and down the mountains seasonally. More controlled archaeological excavations are warranted before many conclusions can be drawn about these mysterious people. From the bronzes alone, it can be said that the makers were skilled metallurgists and artists, they shared certain canons of art and a mythological belief system involving animals, and they rode or controlled horses with frequency.

Some of the most notable Luristan bronze artifacts are the horse trappings and harness ornaments. Their abundance demonstrates the important role of the horse for this culture. Luristan cheekpieces are often quite large, with zoomorphic images that represent both real and mythical beasts. Among the real species, lions and goats are the most common, but equids and mouflon sheep are also featured. The lions have bulbous eyes, large ears, and long tails that curl. The sheep and goats have prominent curved horns. Mythical creatures include winged, human-faced bulls and winged goats.

The enormous size of the cheekpieces meant that they made contact with a large area of the horse's cheek and lower jaw. They compressed the cheeks when the reins were pulled to the right or left, but less so when pulling the reins for forward motion. Most of the cheekpieces had spikes on the inner surface, which could puncture the horse's cheek if the rider or driver was too heavy-handed, especially on turns. The spikes would have been useful in keeping a horse that veers to one side on course, like modern run-out bit cheekpieces that have the more humane brushes.

The mouthpiece in a Luristan bit is typically a rigid, single-piece, straight bar, rather than a jointed bit. The bar bit still functioned as a snaffle because there was no leverage, only direct pressure on the bar, tongue, lips, cheeks, and jaws. Those that are square in cross-section exerted great pressure on the tongue.

Harness rings (Cat. #46) in the form of animal effigies, especially goat and mouflon heads, were also popular. Bronze finials or standards often featured the "master of the beasts" holding two opposing animals, usually felines, in his hands. The human figures depicted on Luristan bronzes have beak noses and large eyes. The purpose of these finials is unknown, but perhaps they were cult objects mounted in shrines.

## Assyrian Horses—Proud as Peacocks

Between 900-600 BCE, the relatively small polity of Assyria (Map 4) grew into one of the most powerful empires in the Near East. Beginning as a city-state of Ashur, in northern Iraq, around 1900 BCE, it gradually expanded on both shores of the Tigris, then westward to the eastern shore of the Euphrates. The core of Assyria was fertile farmland in the floodplain, with mountains to the north and east and semi-desert to the south and west, from which enemies periodically intruded. At its height, the Neo-Assyrian period, Assyria expanded its control westward to Egypt and eastward to Iran, but it ended abruptly when an alliance of Medes and Babylonians overtook it.

The Assyrians, like their predecessors, the Sumerians and Babylonians, used cuneiform to keep their records (Fig. 2, Cat. #66). Their libraries were stocked with thousands of tablets preserving political, economic, and literary information. We know incredible details of the Assyrians because of the abundance of written texts and their extensive and finely executed palace wall reliefs of hunting and battle scenes (Cat. #50-56, 58).

Because so many of the reliefs depict horses and chariots, it is simple to recreate minute features of tack, as well as the construction of their chariots (Fig. 6). Whether it was primarily for pageantry and to tout the prowess of the royalty, the reliefs show that regal horses were flamboyantly adorned with



(Map 4) Assyrian Empire.



(Fig. 6) Alabaster bas-relief of a chariot and four riders from the Assyrian army, from a wall panel in the Palace of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh, circa 645 BC.

Louvre Museum, Paris, AO 190990.  
Photo by Sandra L. Olsen

feather crests, brow pads, blinkers (Fig. 7, Cat. #51), ornate bridles and harnesses, large pompoms, breast ornaments, crenulated or trimmed manes, and tied tails. The cavalrymen rode on saddlecloths decorated with fringe and tassels, as well.

Two of the types of Assyrian tack are particularly interesting because they are so unusual. The heavy rein pompom that hung below the neck of the horse kept tension on the reins, as well as lowering the horse's head and flexing the neck through pressure transferred to the poll and the bit. For archers, the pompom allowed them to free their hands for drawing the bow and shooting the arrows. The low head carriage was useful for the archer who had to aim at targets straight in front of him. From King Sennacherib's time (704-681 BCE), the cavalrymen carried swords and lances, as well as bows and arrows, so presumably the pompom freed their hands to use those weapons also.

The other piece that is rather curious is known as a brow pad, or poll pad. In addition to being ornamental, the brow pad served as a cushion between the horse's poll and the chamfron, dispersed the pressure from the weight of the pompom, and protected the horse from being pole-axed by the enemy. The crest could have also served the dual function of ornamentation and protection of the poll.

The Assyrians depended heavily on their vast infantry, primarily to defend their mountainous northern and eastern borders. However, when confrontations were on the open plain, they were eager to deploy their chariotry. The temporal span of Assyrian chariot warfare was great. Shalmaneser I (1273-1244 BCE) defeated the Gutians, whose territory was in the Zagros Mountains, with these efficient military vehicles, and the Assyrians continued to use them even into the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Their chariots increased in size over time, and are depicted with thick wheel rims and a large box, pulled by strong horses (Fig. 6). Designed to carry four men, these massive vehicles served primarily as firing platforms.

The wall reliefs at Nineveh, Nimrud, and Dur-Sharrukin (Khorasbad) (Map 4) reveal much about the increase in riding from the 9<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The cavalry gradually became more important from the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 BCE), when it still had a supportive role. At this stage, horsemen wore no armor and fought with bows and arrows and javelins. Sometimes men rode in pairs

so that one could control both horses and the other could shoot his arrows. When King Tiglath-Pileser III ruled (744-727 BCE), the horse archers ranked higher in importance in war and were equipped with partial armor. Under Ashurbanipal (668-626 BCE), the Assyrian army included light cavalry with bows and javelins, heavy archers who wore scale armor, and even more heavily armored horsemen who fought against heavy infantry with lances and swords in close battle.

At its maximum expansion, the Assyrian Empire extended deep into Egypt, far up the Nile. This proximity to Nubia provided access to the excellent horses, as well as the breeders and trainers found there. Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III was the first to import Nubian horses into the heart of his sovereign territory. The Assyrians came to depend heavily on the regular supply of Nubian horses to build their cavalry, particularly after the invasion of the Sea People had demonstrated the vulnerability of chariots.

Besides Nubia, the Assyrian kings also demanded horses as levies from their provinces, as indicated by the "Horse Reports." These are numerous tablets found in an archive at Nineveh, probably written during the reign of Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE). Records also show that they exacted horses as tribute from the territories they controlled. The Medes, who had a reputation for their excellence in breeding horses, were told to give large numbers, and when they failed, the Assyrian army invaded. Although there must have been numerous types of horses coming from different regions to serve the various functions required by the Assyrian army, the palace wall reliefs tend to show a certain kind. These animals were of strong build with good bone and ample body mass in relation to their height, but refined features that include a dry head and fine throatlatch.

In many ways, our knowledge of the Assyrian horses is the fullest for any culture in the ancient Near East. Their art and texts elucidate not only attributes of their many uses of the horse, but also those of their neighbors.



(Fig. 7) Assyrian bas-relief of a groom leading horses on the L Wall, Palace of Sargon II, Dur Sharrukin (Khorsabad), 713-706 BCE. Excavations of Paul-Émile Botta, 1843-1844.

Louvre Museum, Paris, AO19883.  
Photo by Sandra L. Olsen

## The Rise of the Persian Empire

Although the Persian Empire (Map 5) was a series of different historical dominions through time, it is the Achaemenid Dynasty (550-330 BCE) we credit with starting the Persian Empire and building it to its zenith. Ruling over the region that included Western Asia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, it was, at that time, the largest and most powerful empire that had ever existed.

The Achaemenid Empire derives its name from Achaemenes (Hakhamanish) the chieftain of the Persians around 700 BCE. His son, Teispes, led the nomadic Persian tribe to southern Iran, establishing a state at Anshan, the capital of the Elamite kingdom (Map 1, VI) that had been destroyed by Assyrian ruler Ashurbanipal in 640 BCE. Teispes' descendants split their kingdom in two, but Cyrus II, or the Great, reunited it and expanded their empire.

Cyrus II set up the first Persian state, overthrowing the Medes, and conquering the territories of the Babylonians, Phoenicians, and Lydians. His son, Cambyses II, followed up by annexing Egypt. But under Darius I, the empire reached its greatest expanse, extending its hegemony as far as the Indus Valley and Thrace. Xerxes I attempted to gain control over Greece, but was turned back at the Battle of Plataea, in 479 BCE.

The accomplishments of the Achaemenid kings were great. The Cyrus Cylinder, the first charter of human rights, was issued after Cyrus took the city of Babylon in 539 BCE in order to prove he would be a benevolent conqueror. This is important, because he set a precedent that continued on, so that conquered peoples were less inclined to revolt. The Achaemenids also improved the Assyrian postal system, their use of secret agents, and the Royal Road, making it easier for them to travel through their vast empire.

It is probably during the Achaemenid rule that the Persians became Zoroastrians, who believed that the one great deity was "the uncreated" Ahura Mazda. He is mentioned frequently in royal texts, including Darius I's Behistun Inscription and the Persepolis Fortification Tablet 377. One of Zoroaster's greatest achievements in religious philosophy was the right to free will. During the Achaemenid period, Ahura Mazda was not depicted, but there was a custom of having an empty chariot pulled by white horses accompany the Persian army in battle.

Persepolis (Map 5), the ancient religious capital of the Persian Empire, was built during the reign of Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great), around 560 BCE. The ancient city is located 70 km northeast of the modern city of Shiraz, in the Fars Province of Iran. The most famous part of Persepolis is the Apadana Palace, or audience hall, with its remarkable columnade made up of 72 animal-headed (bulls, lions, eagles) columns. Construction was begun by Darius the Great, in 515 BCE, and completed some 30 years later by his son Xerxes. The Apadana Grand Staircase has a procession relief showing officials from every part of the Persian Empire bringing tribute to the king at the New Year's Festival.

The prominent horses so often depicted at Persepolis, particularly on the Apadana frieze, were not the light "proto-Arabian" horses we see in ancient Egypt, but rather the heavy "Nisean" breed. Nisean horses were stocky, muscular in build, with thick necks and large ram heads (Cat. #76). According to their skeletal remains, they stood about 16 hands. Nisean horses were reputed by 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE poet Oppian to be the most beautiful, gentle to ride, and obedient to the bit. They are depicted as being both ridden and pulling chariots. According to descriptions, Nisean horses were mostly dark bay, but could also be black, red and blue roan, palomino, and even spotted. Two white Nisean stallions were supposed to pull the chariot of the Persian king. During the reign of Darius I, Nisean horses were bred from Armenia to Sogdiana (modern Uzbekistan and western Tajikistan).

They were called Nisean because they were said to have come from the Nisean Plain in Media, where very large horses were bred, according to Herodotus. The location of this plain is uncertain, but because it was known to be five to six days march by infantry from Ecbatana, it may have been the Vale of Borigerd. There were reports of between 50,000 and 150,000 horses on the Plain of Media, where alfalfa/lucerne grew in abundance.



(Map 5) Achaemenid Empire.

The Persian cavalry horses had clipped manes to prevent the archer's arrows from tangling in them. The forelock was kept long, but tied up to form a plume, and the tail was also tied for combat. The saddlecloths were quilted and vividly decorated, sometimes with a scalloped border. Bridles were also ornamented, with strap dividers that resembled boar's heads and tusks (Cat. #77), raptor claws, or bird beaks (Cat. #78-80), as well as roundels. Achaemenid bits were usually made of bronze, although some iron ones have been found. They are jointed snaffles with the canons attached to the cheekpieces. The cheekpieces are either straight or curved rods, sometimes terminating in a horse hoof or phallus.

There are indications that the Achaemenids had limited barding, that is armor for the horse's neck, chest, and flanks, as well as head and thigh protection. The cavalrymen wore bronze or iron helmets and sometimes lamellar armor. Like the Saka of Central Asia, the Achaemenid horsemen are occasionally depicted with domed helmets, neck collars, and protective arm and back coverings.

The famous Greek writer Xenophon, whose influential treatises on the care and training of horses are still perused by equestrians, reported that the Persians hobbled their herds during night grazing and tied bags around the feet of their horses on winter marches to prevent them from sinking into deep snow.

In the early part of 330 BCE, Alexander and his Macedonian army took Persepolis, plundered its wealth, and set fire to many of the palace buildings. The Palace of Xerxes was aggressively razed as revenge for the damage done to Athens by Xerxes in 480 BCE. This marked the end of Persepolis and the Achaemenid Empire.

## The Legendary Alexander the Great

Born in Macedon, as the son of King Philip II, Alexander (356-323 BCE) was a distinctive individual from the beginning. There are tales of how his father gave him the unruly horse Bucephalus for his thirteenth birthday and how young Alexander tamed him. According to the legend, Alexander figured out that the horse was afraid of his own shadow. By turning the horse away so he could not see the shadow, Alexander was able to safely mount him. Whether this is true, or only helped to build the young prince's reputation, Bucephalus served in many battles with his owner.

Bucephalus was said to be a Nisean horse, although it had a Thessalian pedigree. The heavy type, whether Nisean or Thessalian, was supposed to have had large bulges on the forehead that were sometimes called "horns". This could explain how Alexander's horse got his name, which means "bul-head" in Greek. Bucephalus died just three years before his master at the Battle of the Hydaspes River, in Punjab, (today in Pakistan), when Alexander fought against King Porus of Paurava.

Alexander succeeded his father, after Phillip II was assassinated in 336 BCE. His first and perhaps most significant action was the defeat of the Persian Empire. Known for incorporating troops from many nations, his army consisted of Macedonians, Greeks, Thracians, Illyrians, and various mercenaries. With his mighty forces, Alexander defeated the Persians repeatedly, beginning in Anatolia, then progressing to Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, Gaza, Egypt and Bactria, before finally taking Mesopotamia.

The Macedonian military under both Phillip II and Alexander possessed some heavy cavalry, with men wearing helmets and body armor and equipped with long wooden spears.

Alexander the Great followed trade routes to India, fought and lost battles in the Hindu Kush, and died in retreat in Iran in 323 BCE.

## In the Wake of Alexander's Demise: The Seleucid Empire

After Alexander the Great's premature death, his generals struggled over how to partition his enormous empire. After the Partition of Triparadiscus Treaty, in 320 BCE, Seleucus I Nicator (Victor) (358- 281 BCE) received Babylonia and most of Alexander's eastern territories. The vast size of his domain (Map 6), its diversity, and some particularly antagonistic provinces on its margins made it difficult to maintain, despite his large army. He set up his capital in Babylon in 312 BCE, ruling over an area much larger than Babylonia, extending to Phrygia, Armenia, Cappadocia, Persis, Parthia, Bactria, Arabia, Tapouria, Sogdia, Arachosia, and Hyrcania, as far as the river Indus.

One of the most well known incidents in the history of the Seleucid Empire was the Battle of Ipsus, in Phrygia (western Anatolia), in 301 BCE, where the various successors to Alexander's Empire fought

over their still disputed territory. Seleucus emerged victorious because of an advantage he obtained in a previous confrontation on the Indus.

In 305 BCE, Seleucus dared to cross the Indus, near Punjab, but was confronted by Chandragupta, the first king of the Maurya Empire (320-298 BCE), and his 600,000 troops and 9000 war elephants. Chandragupta, who would become known as the unifier of India, had already defeated Alexander the Great's satrapies by the time he was twenty. Seleucus struck a treaty with him that involved a marriage alliance between Chandragupta and a Macedonian princess. In return Chandragupta gave Seleucus 500 elephants that subsequently played a critical role in the victory Seleucus' army had over Antigonus I at the Battle of Ipsus. The success of Seleucus was marked by the combination of tactics involving infantry, horse cavalry, missile troops (javelin and arrow), and Chandragupta's elephants.

The Seleucid army depended primarily on its infantry, and the numbers of heavy cavalry were never significant. However, along with Ptolemy's army, the Seleucid military was among the first to introduce cataphracts. Cataphracts were heavy cavalry in which the bodies of both the men and the horses were covered in scalar armor, greater than that worn by the Achaemenid horsemen. At the arsenal at Ai Khanoum, in northeastern Afghanistan, a Seleucid scalar corselet and shoulder covers, laminated leg and foot armor, and the anterior part of horse armor were found.

## The Impact of the Parthian Shot

Around 238 BCE, a nomadic Iranian tribe from Central Asia called the Arsacids seized control of the satrapy of Parthia, in northeast Iran, defeating the Seleucids. Becoming known as the Parthians, they gained dominance over the Iranian Plateau, although they never truly united the various local groups under them. The Parthians were great rivals of the Romans and in many ways proved to be a worthy opponent on the battlefield.

Nisa (Map 7, Fig. 8), located about 19 km north of Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, was their capital from 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Its location successfully blocked Roman eastern expansion and took advantage of commerce across Central Asia. One of the most important aspects of the Parthians was their influence along major north-south and east-west trade routes. At the height of their empire, their power even extended to Ubar, probably in Oman, the nexus for the frankincense trade route. As middlemen on the Silk Road, they had friendly relations with China, but western expansion by the Parthians created problems with Rome, beginning in 53 BCE.

Parthian territory eventually encompassed modern day Armenia, Iraq, Georgia, eastern Turkey, eastern Syria, Central Asia, Pakistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and UAE. They were known for keeping astronomical records and the fact that they were the last culture to use cuneiform writing. But, perhaps their most lasting contribution to history was the "Parthian Shot."

You wound, like Parthians, while you fly,  
And kill with a retreating eye:  
Retire the more, the more we press  
To draw us into ambushes.

SAMUEL BUTLER, AN HEROICAL EPISTLE OF HUDBRAS TO HIS LADY (1678)

The Parthian Shot, today sometimes referred to as a "Parting Shot," refers to the military tactic used by the Parthian light cavalry that involved feigning retreat so that their enemy would pursue them. As the enemy approached from behind, the Parthian warriors would turn and shoot their arrows over the horse's croup. This requires great skill, since both hands are needed to draw the bow and the horse must be directed only with the pressure of the thighs. At this time, they did not have the advantage



(Map 6) Seleucid Empire.



(Map 7) Parthian Empire.



(Fig. 8) Ruins of Parthian capital of Nisa in modern Turkmenistan.

of stirrups, although figurines (Cat. #91) and depictions on Parthian coins indicate they sometimes used saddles. They were not the only cavalries to use this technique, however, since it was common among all the Eurasian steppe nomads, including the Scythians, Huns, Magyars, and Mongols, and was even employed by their predecessors, the Achaemenid Empire (Cat. #82).

Parthians had a second military advantage, the cataphracts (Cat. #95), or heavy horsemen, which they employed to a greater extent than any previous armies. The name means “closed on all sides” in Greek, referring to the fact that both the soldiers and their horses were covered in scale

armor. Helmets and breastplates, as well as bronze and iron horse armor are mentioned in written descriptions. The heavy cavalry typically fought with lances.

Dura Europos (Map 7), on the Euphrates, in Syria, provides the most remarkable evidence for late Parthian (3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) cataphract armor. A destroyed arsenal in Tower 19 there produced several sets of bronze and iron scalar horse armor. One incredibly well-preserved and nearly complete set of bronze horse armor has the scales sewn directly on a leather backing. Its small size reflects the surprisingly diminutive horse that wore it.

Many other groups also had cataphracts, including the earlier Scythians, Assyrians, Seleucids, and Achaemenids, but in very limited numbers. The Roman cavalry, which had not depended on heavy armor, was forced to adopt it after several defeats at the hands of other armies that did utilize them, including the Parthians. The Sasanians, who followed the Parthians, relied on them to an even greater extent.

The most decisive battle employing the Parthian Shot and cataphracts was the *Battle of Carrhae* (modern day Harran, Turkey), in which the Parthians beat the Romans in 53 BC. The Roman cavalry was led by Crassus, one of the triumvirate controlling the Republic of Rome with Pompey and Julius Caesar. The death of Crassus at Carrhae led to the end of the Republic and the beginning of Caesar's empire. With their 1,000 cataphracts and 9,000 light horse archers, the Parthians defeated the Roman cavalry, which was 40,000 strong. Although the Parthians were greatly outnumbered by the Romans, their tactics and strategies proved superior.

Because of their reputation as superb equestrian archers, Parthian territory went unchallenged for hundreds of years. Eventually the Romans to the west, Kushans in the east, and Alans in the northwest attacked Nisa and their other settlements. The end of the Parthian Empire came when their vassals, the Sasanians, defeated their last king, Artabanus IV, in 224 CE.



(Map 8) Sasanian Empire.

## The Persians Rise Again: The Sasanian Dynasty

From around 208 CE, Ardashir I Papagan ruled the city of Estakhr (Map 8, Fig. 9), previously an Achaemenid settlement located just 5 km from Persepolis. Ardashir, his father Papak, and his elder brother felt a close affinity with the Achaemenids and particularly the ruins of their former capital. In fact, it was the dream of Ardashir to restore the Persian Empire to the importance it had in Achaemenid times. History recognizes that he and his successors achieved that goal in many ways, since their empire lasted some 400 years.

Throughout the centuries, the capital of the Sasanian Empire moved several times. It was first and only briefly at Estakhar, because that was the home of Ardashir I, the founder of the dynasty. Estakhar also was reputed to house the royal treasury of the Sasanian Empire. The next Sasanian capital was Ctesiphon (Map 8), previously that of the Parthians, located on the Tigris, across the river from the Hellenistic city of Seleucia. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Ctesiphon was the largest city in the known world. Today its ruins are 35 km south of Baghdad.

To preserve their vast empire, the Persians had to maintain an enormous army. By this time

chariot warfare had been edged out and infantry was overshadowed by heavy cavalry. The Romans called the units of heavy cavalry deployed by the Sasanians *clibanarii*, a term that may have come from the Greek word for oven, in reference to the discomfort caused by wearing a suit of heavy armor in the desert. Alternatively, it may be derived from the Middle Persian word for neck guard, worn by the Sasanian military. Similar to the Parthian cataphract and much like the medieval knights who followed, the *clibanarii* were assembled from nobility. As such they formed a highly-trained military elite, which served as a model for later armies. In addition to the *clibanarii*, they retained the cataphracts, and enlisted mercenaries and allies as light cavalry. War elephants were also implemented in battle. The elephant corps was never large, required roads to be built through difficult terrain, and functioned best on the open plain, but they were brought into all sorts of battle conditions and the psychological effects on the enemy has to be taken into consideration in assessing their military value.

Among the body armor and clothing a Sasanian cavalryman could be outfitted with are: a helmet, neck guard or torc, cuirass, hauberk (mail shirt), girdle, belt, trousers, gauntlets, and thigh guards (Cat. #100). Mesh armor generally replaced the previous scalar armor of the Parthians, but lamellar coats are known. The helmets are similar to the *Spangenhelm*, which had two molded halves joined down the middle with a metal strip. By the time of Shapur II (309-379 BCE), the horseman and his mount could be covered almost entirely in thick iron plates. The *clibanarii* and cataphracts fought with composite bows, swords, long lances, battleaxes, and maces. They also carried shields, bow cases full of arrows and extra bowstrings.

The Sasanian horses, with their heavy bodies, thick necks and prominent crests (Fig. 10), retained much of the look of the Nisean breed of Achaemenid times. Given the incredible combined weight of the soldier's and the horse's armor, it is not surprising that the *clibanarii* mounts would be massively built, much like the later ones of medieval knights.

Sasanian light cavalry horses may be depicted wearing a bridle, phalerae on the neck or chest, and saddle blanket secured by a crupper. In addition, riders are often shown wearing tasseled balloon streamers, apparently attached to the crupper so they float off behind the horse (Cat. #103). The heavily armored horses, on the other hand could be almost completely covered in protective gear. Interestingly, there is no indication that stirrups were used. The Byzantine ruler Maurice (582-602 BCE) pushed his cavalry to adopt them because the Avars from the East were employing them so successfully against his cavalry.

In 638 BCE, the 29<sup>th</sup> and final Sasanian king, Yasdegerd III, sent an ambassador to China to plead with the Tang emperor to rescue his empire from the conquering Arabs. The most the Chinese leader would do was to provide asylum for Persian refugees inside his border. With no military assistance forthcoming, a 14-year struggle with the Arabs ensued, culminating eventually in the downfall of the Sasanian Empire in 651 BCE, when Yasdegerd III was killed in the Central Asian city of Merv by a thief. From that point the region converted to Islam. The Zoroastrian religion still survives today because refugees escaped to Central Asia. Their calendar begins in the year 632 BCE, which marks the coronation of the young Yasdegerd III.



(Fig. 9) This wall relief at Naqsh-i Rustam represents the "Investiture of Ardashir I (224-243 CE), first king of the Sasanian Dynasty, by the god Ahura Mazda." The horse of Ahura Mazda, the god of light and good, on the left, tramples the dead body of Angra Mainyu, god of darkness and evil, while King Ardashir's horse, on the right, tramples the body of the last Parthian king of the Arsacid Dynasty, Artabanus IV. The relief dates to circa 230 CE.

Photo by Ginolerhino 2002



(Fig. 10) Sasanian gilded silver horse head from the Kerman region of Iran, 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Louvre Museum, Paris, MA0132.

Photo by Sandra L. Olsen



(Fig. 11) The grooming of a chariot horse, depicted in a carved and painted wall relief at Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple of Ramesses III. Luxor, West Bank.

Photo by Sandra L. Olsen

CHAPTER 2

## The Proto-Arabian Horse appears in Ancient Egypt

## The Introduction of the Horse in Egypt

It is well known that the horse was not indigenous to Egypt, but rather was introduced sometime in the 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE as a fully domesticated animal. The horse in Egypt can thus be viewed as *faunal exotica*, a factor that has significant implications in terms of its social status, means of acquisition, breeding and frequency through time in this region. Its late introduction may also be invoked to explain the horse's relatively minor role in Egyptian religion - despite a variety of admirable attributes, the horse never rose to be incorporated into the divine bestiary. Although there is little evidence to suggest that numbers of horses were ever great inside Dynastic Egypt, the pharaohs' armies used them extensively in chariot battles in Asia.

Judith Forbis and a few other scholars have observed the similarity between the modern Arabian breed and the ancient Egyptian horse, as reflected in both artistic depictions and actual skeletal remains. Indeed, the most solid evidence for the earliest proto-Arabian breed is in this region, but the appearance is rather sudden in the New Kingdom. Because at this late date depictions of the horse already express many Arabian characteristics, researchers have to broaden their investigation to include Asia, which supplied Egypt with most of its horses through trade and war booty.

Let us begin with the original Egyptian horses, which predate any Arabian characteristics by more than 300 years. The first arrival of the horse in Egypt is normally attributed to the Hyksos, the Asiatic dynasty that ruled in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period, 1650-1550 BCE. Archaeological investigations in the Nile Delta region, particularly by Manfred Bietak for the past 40 years, have produced early evidence of the horse, including bone remains from Tell el-Dab'a, circa 1600 BCE, and Tell Heuba (Map 9), which was occupied between 1786-1552 BCE. Tell el-Dab'a, located in the delta on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, is one of the most important sites in Egypt concerning the horse. It is now known that it was Avaris, the Hyksos capital in Egypt. Numerous remains of the horse have been found there, including a nearly complete skeleton discovered recently. These finds provide support for the view that the arrival of the horse, like that of the Hyksos themselves, was not a swift invasion, as claimed by the Ptolemaic Historian Manetho, but rather a relatively slow migration.

Sir Flinders Petrie discovered horse remains during excavations between 1930-34 at Tell el-Ajjul (Map 9), a site in Gaza that he attributed to the Hyksos. This sparked his conclusion that Gaza was a convenient route for the movement of the horse from the Near East to Egypt and that the Hyksos were thereby responsible for its introduction. Unfortunately, the timing for the horse at Tell el-Ajjul is imprecise, with the calibrated radiocarbon date of the single surviving skull spanning a broad range of 2000-1400 BCE.

Despite the weight of evidence for the route from Gaza to the Nile Delta, the claim for the oldest horse along the Nile appears to be far to the south at Buhen Fortress (Map 9), on the Second Cataract, in northernmost Sudan. The death of the Buhen horse has been attributed to a conflagration of the fortress that occurred in 1675 BCE. However, because the dating of the horse is by indirect association, rather than on the bones themselves, some have questioned the accuracy of this conclusion. It should be noted that the Hyksos had contact with Buhen, and pottery from Tell el-Dab'a has been found at the fortress. Given the present state of knowledge and the lack of precise dates for individual horse remains, it is still difficult to reconstruct who was responsible for introducing the horse to Egypt or pinpoint the exact timing of its arrival. However, the most reasonable route of entry is still across Gaza, and the Hyksos are the most likely people to have delivered it. It can be said fairly confidently that the horse was there by the 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE and was soon after distributed from the Delta to the Second Cataract.



(Map 9) Egypt, Sudan, and the Levant, showing key archaeological sites.

## Payback: Chariot Warfare Conquers the Foreign Invaders

Chariot warfare became established in Asia during the Late Bronze Age. Actual parts of chariots, either introduced by Asiatic mercenaries on the Nile delta or brought home as booty from Syria and Palestine have been reported for the Middle Kingdom. The first record for the use of chariots in battle in Egypt consists of partial depictions in the mortuary complex of Ahmose, in Abydos, dating to around 1525 BCE. Ahmose, founder of both the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and the New Kingdom, defeated the Hyksos, who had ruled Egypt for only around 100 years. His father, Taa (Seqenenra) (reign ca. 1560 BCE), and older brother, Kamose (reign 1555-1550 BCE), may have both died attempting to rid Egypt of these Asian intruders when Ahmose was a young boy.

After applying chariot warfare to expel the Hyksos, Ahmose went on to reclaim both Canaan in the north and Nubia in the south. Stone temples adjacent to his pyramid contain thousands of carved and painted fragments of battle scenes in which his armies are in combat with an Asian enemy, most likely the Hyksos. They show archers, ships, corpses of Asians, and some of the earliest known artistic depictions of horses and chariots in Egypt. Ironically, the chariot, composite bow, and horse originally arrived, like the Hyksos, from Asia. Ahmose would have had access to the horse and most likely the chariot, from Kamose's conflict with the Hyksos, if not by other means. The Second Stele of Kamose in the Temple of Amun in Karnak, at Luxor (Map 9), describes the various kinds of damage he inflicted on the Hyksos in great detail, including seizing their horses.

Once the Hyksos were ejected, the early part of the New Kingdom brought consolidation of Egypt and a rise in militarism. Royal depictions and texts emphasize the skills, prowess, and courage of the king in leading his armies to victory after victory. The pharaoh in his chariot crushing the enemy is an often-repeated scene in temples and tombs, and on scarabs. As an example, a scarab from the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty commemorates a chariot battle in which the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty king Thutmose I (reign 1504-1492 BCE) pursues a foe (Cat. #109). This reflection on the accomplishment of a previous king is intriguing and its goal is not well understood.

In the New Kingdom, control of the army was no longer transmitted down to provinces and municipalities, but was unified under the strong central government. The army continued to expand its forces until, by Ramesside times, it was said to number 37,000 Egyptian infantry, plus a large contingent of foreign mercenaries. Military commanders were considered full-time professionals afforded a relatively high status, and participation in key battles and ownership of a chariot were important symbols of prestige. Their successes on the battlefield often resulted in promotions to powerful bureaucratic positions. Egyptian control in Asia and Nubia through victories translated into greater exchange of resources and products, including elite goods. The military was, therefore, not only centralized, but also politicized and integrated into the economy.

During the New Kingdom reorganization of the military, a new department of chariotry was established. In contrast to infantry, the chariot only functioned well on large, open plains but, nonetheless, it still played a crucial role in conflict. This was the height of chariot warfare in Asia, and military equipment, tactics and strategies were influenced to a large extent by this powerful war vehicle. A revolution in chariot technology had transpired and they were no longer bulky and awkward as the preceding terra cotta models in the Near East indicated. Instead, the new chariots were lightweight and swift. Egyptian chariot wheels had four, or more typically, six spokes; the axles were moved to the rear for stability; and, instead of heavy cedar wood frames, they used the stronger, lighter ash or birch. Initially, the box had a wicker platform for the driver to stand on, but later it was made of leather to act as a better shock absorber. The Egyptians adopted many foreign terms for maintaining chariots and caring for horses, suggesting that the Hurrians were an important source for obtaining the chariots themselves or knowledge concerning them.

Repeated battles in Asia led to the adoption of new weaponry and armor, as well. The Egyptian soldiers were attired in military skirts and distinguished from foreign mercenaries, who wore their local clothing styles and sometimes helmets. Weapons included the composite bow, shields, javelins, spears, short swords, and scimitars. These were produced in the temples and armories, often by foreign craftsmen.

## The Proto-Arabian Horse Arrives in the New Kingdom

With any domestic animal, a combination of natural and artificial selection contributes to the survival of the species and the development of individual breeds. Animal breeds are modified by artificial selection, but, additionally, when they are transported far outside their native wild habitat, they are likely to be influenced by natural selection, as well.

Because the horse's original wild habitat was a cold, dry steppe environment, early domestic horses were better suited to extreme cold than extreme heat. The conformation of the wild European horse in French Ice Age cave art (32,000-12,000 years ago) reflects this in its head and body. Likewise, the short and extremely robust limb and foot bones of the skeleton of the Ice Age horse and early Eurasian steppe domestic horses (3500 BCE) differ from those of breeds that later became better adapted to hot climates.

In the case of Egypt, the domestic donkey, *Equus asinus*, and its progenitor, the indigenous wild African ass, *Equus africanus*, were far better adapted to the region's heat and sparse desert vegetation than the first introduced horses at Tell el Dab'a likely would have been. However, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of the New Kingdom, by the time of Thutmose III's reign (1479-1425 BCE), a distinctive horse appears in art and may also be detectable in the few known skeletal remains. Because of its physical features, it is likely that this animal represents a proto-Arabian horse, one already well suited to desert heat.

Whether the Arabian horse arrived in Egypt as an identifiable breed or developed there, the features that distinguish it must be the product of both natural and artificial selection. Furthermore, adaptation to a hot, dry environment must have continued to play a role in the success of this breed to modern times.

The Arabian horse, as it is known today, has a suite of characteristics that allows it to survive in an environment typified by extreme heat and sparse vegetation that is marginal or even intolerable to most horse breeds. These are discussed in detail in the Introduction of this volume.

The average body weight of desert Arabians is 360-500 kg (800-1100 lbs), and the average height at the withers is 1.40-1.51 m. The high surface area to volume ratio of an Arabian horse's body is consistent with facilitating heat loss. Although by today's standards, an Arabian is small, that height was fairly typical in ancient times and even a bit larger than the early domesticated horses of the Eurasian steppe. Obviously, the Arabian breed is extremely well-adapted to situations that would overheat the average horse. In some ways, it could even be viewed as better acclimatized physically to the heat than the indigenous donkey.

Could some of these adaptive characteristics have been favored at an early stage in the development of the breed because of extreme work requirements that, in a hot climate, would take a heavy toll on horses not designed to dissipate heat quickly? In the early centuries after the introduction of the horse, riding in the Near East and Egypt appears to have been poorly developed and even shunned by high status individuals. Conveyance by chariot was preferred until around 900 BCE, when cavalries began to replace chariot warfare to a large extent. The Kikkuli texts, written by skilled Mitanni horse trainers for the Hittites, detail the incredibly rigorous training that chariot horses endured. Such physical workouts, as well as the actual battles, would have rapidly led to the selection of those individual horses that possessed the attributes most likely to ensure survival. Did the use of the horse for chariot warfare contribute to the development of certain breeds and, specifically, in the case of the Egyptian horse, can any of its characteristics be linked to selection for ideal chariot horses? Many of the adaptations that enable the Arabian to dissipate heat would be even more necessary if the animal was part of a team pulling a chariot and one or, more rarely in Egypt, two persons at high speed under extremely stressful conditions, such as during battle or a hunt.

Further features on the Arabian horse that could be beneficial to chariotry include large, protruding eyes, placed high for improved vision, and ears that have more rotation than other horses to augment quick responses to noise. The neck of an Arabian is powerful and arched, so the head is held high. Given that the harness saddle for a chariot rested on the base of the neck, this condition should give the Arabian an advantage.

Arabian horses are short-coupled, meaning they tend to have reduced loin regions. Equids vary individually in their number of vertebrae, but Arabian horses, more often than other equids, are missing one in their spine. This can be either a thoracic or a lumbar; if a thoracic vertebra is missing, then a pair of ribs will also be absent. A shorter back probably makes a small horse stronger for riding, since the weight of the rider can put significant strain on the animal. However, if a short-coupled horse

is present in Egypt before riding played a significant role for the horse, might there be another cause for the initial development of this feature? A shorter back on a small horse would also make it stronger for pulling a vehicle, even a lightweight chariot, with one or two riders. It would also bring the driver closer to the head of the horse, where control transpires. The Arabian's sacrum is tipped forward and raised in the back, which assists in elevating the tail, but a horizontal sacrum is also considered to enhance speed.

## The Bare Bones: Skeletal Remains of Egyptian Horses

Despite the fact that Egypt is renowned for its excellent preservation of perishable materials like human bodies, leather, wooden objects, and so forth, there are very few skeletons of horses from the archaeological record. This is in part due to the fact that horses were not particularly common within the core of Egypt, although they were kept in the Delta and on the margins for chariot warfare in Asia. In addition, since horses were outside the Egyptian religious bestiary, they were not typically sacrificed and placed in tombs. It is ironic, considering that the king's chariots might be interred with him. Archaeologists have studied the few horse remains that have been recovered. Even after putting all the horse skeletons from all time periods over the whole region together, fewer than 10 complete individuals have been recovered. In addition, there are several skulls and a few dozen bits and pieces. Reconstructions based on the lengths of leg bones indicate that ancient Egyptian horses stood between 13.7-14.6 hands.

The Fortress of Buhen, in Nubia, as was mentioned above, produced a skeleton with the earliest reported date for a horse in Egypt, at around 1675 BCE. It exhibited considerable pathologies, reflecting its hard life, as well as wear on its lower teeth from champing on a bit. Pathologies can inform on the health, type of treatment received, and work endured through the life of the horse. There are two additional early skeletons from the Delta, one from Tell Heuba, and one from Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris), the Hyksos capital, but because they were recovered from marshy areas, they are not very well-preserved. As mentioned above, there is a skull from Tell el-Ajjul, in Gaza, that may be fairly old, and there are additional skulls from Tell el-Dab'a. None of these early skulls and skeletons, which possess rather coarse features and heavy bone, resembles an Arabian, or even a proto-Arabian.

For the New Kingdom, the best skeleton was said to have belonged to Senenmut, the vizier of Queen Hatshepsut (reign 1473-1458 BCE). It was buried in a cenotaph in his honor (he may have died in battle in Asia) in front of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri, on the west bank of Luxor. This horse is particularly interesting, because it is extremely gracile, particularly in the limbs, and could be an example of the proto-Arabian type. In addition, it has multiple pathologies. Although it has been identified as a mare because it lacks canine teeth, this author is inclined to believe that it might have been a sterile male. The animal was about six years old when it died and had a large bone tumor in its pelvic region. If the tumor first formed before the horse was 6 months old, it could have made it a natural gelding and could explain its lack of canine teeth. In this case, it would have retained the external appearance of an intact stallion.

Senenmut's horse was buried with a linen saddlecloth, like those that covered chariot horses, and it has several ribs with healed fractures, as if it had been in a bad accident. Chariot accidents can break the ribs as the horse rolls over the draft pole.

The Egyptian horses depicted pulling chariots in tomb scenes and on temple walls, whether in hunts or battle, are nearly always indicated as males, just as they are in art all over the Near East. Males tend to be more aggressive and less reticent in frightening situations, plus they do not have the problem of pregnancy and care of foals to contend with. History and practical observation have shown that mixing the sexes could create chaos on the battlefield, particularly if a mare was in season.

This horse was actually discovered with much of its skin intact, but at some point in the Cairo Museum the soft tissue was removed and the skeleton cleaned for display. Photographs of the horse mummy do not indicate the sex, so unless a DNA study is done, we may never know the true sex of the individual. It would indeed be a rarity if Senenmut used a mare to pull his chariot. Then one has to wonder whether the other horse in the pair would have been a male or another female.

There is also a full skeleton from Saqqara, but it is not securely dated and could be relatively late (20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to Ptolemaic). From Sudan, there is a skeleton from Soleb II (1408-1372 BCE), and two from the Kushite royal cemetery of el-Kurru that date to 747-656 BCE. In addition, there are partial

remains from various sites, including Sai (circa 1500 BCE), Tell el-Dab'a (circa 1600 BCE), Saqqara (1186 BCE-30 CE), Hillat el-Arab (890 BCE-320 CE), and Tell el-Fara'in (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE) (Map 9). The horses from Tell el-Dab'a are medium-sized with coarser crania and thicker leg and foot bones, but from the New Kingdom on, many of the horses appear to be about the same build as the modern Arabian, with slender feet and legs.

## Artistic Representations of the Horse

Representations of the horse in Egypt occur in a wide range of media, including tomb walls, scarabs, figurines, amulets, handles, harness coverings, ostraca, and stelae. They inform about the breeds, pelage, chariotry and riding, tack and ornamentation, status and function, care and grooming (including trimmed manes), foreign involvement, and many other aspects. The earliest extant depictions of horses in Egypt date to the reign of Ahmose, where they appear in pairs as chariot horses. In this capacity the horse subsequently becomes a recurrent actor in scenes depicting the king engaged in battle or hunting (Cat. #107, 109, 111, 117).

Riding is less commonly depicted and appears to reflect its typical limitation to scouts, messengers, grooms, and the like. One possible exception is the representation of a horse and rider in the tomb of Horemheb, the last pharaoh of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1323-1295 BCE) (Fig. 12). If the rider was Horemheb, this is a departure from the usual scene of the pharaoh in a chariot. When his background is considered, his choice of riding would not seem so unusual. Horemheb was not from the royal lineage - he served as the commander-in-chief of the army under pharaohs Tutankhamun (reign 1336-1323 BCE) and Ay (reign 1327-1323 BCE) before rising to power. The rider, whoever he may be, is sitting relatively far back on his mount. There is also an example on a glazed steatite plaque that may refer to Thutmose III's own equestrian abilities. Although cavalries supplanted chariots relatively late, horsemen were occasionally shown wielding weapons.

Another example of a rider on horseback can be found on the north wall of the Great Temple at Abu Simbel (Map 9), built during the reign of Ramesses II, in a scene extolling his success at the Battle of Qadesh (Map 9). In a similar scene, at Luxor Temple a scout is shown on his mount with a bow in one hand, possibly an arrow in the other, and a quiver on his back. He appears to be riding sidesaddle, but this may just be the artist's solution for presenting the man's full body. Like the rider in Horemheb's tomb, he is positioned in the middle of the horse's back, rather than in the forward seat.

Other examples of riding in Egypt include an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty axe blade with a cut-out of a horse and rider (Cat. #108) from around 1300 BCE, and an unusual wooden statue of an Egyptian male sitting on the back of a black horse in the Metropolitan Museum of Art that probably dates to the Amarna (1352-1340 BCE) or post-Amarna period.

The horse occasionally appears in association with the Asian goddess Astarte, who, very probably, like the horse itself, is an import from the region of Syria-Palestine. Images of Asiatics and Nubians bringing horses to the Egyptian pharaoh as tribute reiterate the animal's alien quality and suggest that the horse retained its exotic character despite its integration into Egyptian royal and military affairs.

A comprehensive study of artistic representations in the region of Luxor has been conducted by Catherine Rommelaere. She has presented a compelling argument that at least two breeds existed in the New Kingdom, prior to the Amarna period, which she labeled the *Longiligne* and *Bréviligne* types. The *Longiligne*, or long-backed, horse appeared first, showing up on a scarab with Thutmose I's cartouche, as well as in the tomb of Djehouti-hotep at Debeira, Nubia. It becomes more common by the end of Thutmose III's reign. The *Longiligne* type has a long, narrow head with a convex profile, long ears, neck, mane, and back, and a sharply-angled croup.

The *Bréviligne*, or short-backed, horse first appears in the tomb of nobleman Amenmose, at the beginning of Amenhotep II's reign (1427-1400 BCE), also in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of the New Kingdom. It is this type that most closely resembles our modern Arabian, with traits that include: a short head with a straight or slightly concave profile; broad forehead; large eyes; short, fine and erect ears; ample chest; short back; round and high croup; and a high tail carriage. This proto-Arabian type is exemplified on a jasper ring bezel with Amenhotep II's prenomen on it (Cat. #110) and a whip handle in the form of a stallion (Cat. #113), dated to Amenhotep III's reign (1390-1352 BCE).



(Fig. 12) Horse and rider depicted in the limestone relief of a military encampment scene, in the Tomb of Horemheb, 18th Dynasty.

Palagi Collection inv. MCABo EG 1889, Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna © Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico

An additional example can be found in a scene from the tomb of Userhat (TT 56), a middle level official for Amenhotep II. This painted plaster panel illustrates two grooms bringing an offering of a chariot and a horse. In another scene with a similar type of horse, Userhat is shown hunting gazelles and hares from his chariot (Cat. #107).



**(Fig. 13)** Fragment of painted plaster from the tomb of Sebekhotep, Luxor, West Bank, 18th Dynasty, circa 1400 BCE. The British Museum EA 37987.

The Trustees of the British Museum

A fragment of a painted plaster scene in the tomb of Sebekhotep, a senior treasury official during the reign of Thutmose IV (1400-1390 BCE), also depicts this *Bréviligne* type well (Fig. 13). The scene demonstrates that part of Sebekhotep's responsibilities included receiving products from the Near East and Africa on behalf of the king. In the full scene, two men, probably Syrians, are shown paying homage to Sebekhotep, while other men carry vessels, some of gold and semi-precious stones, and an elephant tusk. It is possible, therefore, that the horse depicted here was brought to Egypt from Syria or a neighboring region in Asia.

Horses are not the only equids shown in Egyptian art. The donkey was more common because it was domesticated in Egypt from its ancestor, the African wild ass, around 3000 BCE. As an indigenous species, it was readily available and pre-adapted to the hot, arid environment. Once horses were introduced, it became possible to hybridize them with donkeys to produce mules and hinnies. Both have been documented in Egyptian art, although there are not many examples of either. The hinnie is rarer than the mule, probably because it is more difficult to achieve a successful mating between a jenny and a stallion. Also, the mule, being generally larger and stronger than the hinnie, is more useful for work.

The best example of a pair of hinnies can be witnessed in a scene referred to as "Inspecting the Fields" from a fragment of wall painting removed from the tomb of Nebamun and now housed in the British Museum (Fig. 14). Nebamun was a grain accountant of the Temple of Amun, probably toward the end of the reign of Amenophis III. Knowledge of the precise location of his tomb has since been lost, but it is thought to have been at the northern end of the necropolis on the West Bank of Luxor, in the region known as Dra Abu el-Naga.

It is interesting to contrast the upper panel in this painting, which shows a pair of horses harnessed to their chariot with the reins held taut by an attendant, and the lower panel with a pair of hinnies also harnessed to a chariot. The horses are poised at attention, ready to move at a moment's notice, but the hinnies are relaxed, enjoying a meal of grain from a container under a sycamore tree. Their attendant is himself in a casual state, seated backwards in the chariot loosely holding the reins slack. That the animals in the lower panel are hinnies is evident from their horse-like head and small ears, combined with the ass-like erect mane, tasseled tail, and body conformation.



**(Fig. 14)** "Inspecting the Fields" fragment of a wall panel from the tomb of Nebamun, circa 1350 BCE, showing proto-Arabian horses and hinnies. British Museum EA 37982

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## Written References to the Horse in Egypt

Texts inform about a wide array of subjects, including: riding; chariotry; warfare; status; the acquisition of horses through immigration, trade or war booty; the keeping of horses in stables; and much more. The records reveal Egypt's struggle to integrate the exotic horse into the native lexicon. The Egyptians adopted Semitic names from West Asia for both the horse, *ssm. (t)*, and the chariot, *mrkbt*. Perhaps to express their appreciation for these newly acquired beasts, the Egyptians did add their own appellation for the horse, which can be translated to mean "beautiful." The horse-drawn chariot was also

referred to by a traditional Egyptian term, *htr*, which emphasized the animal's labor.

Both horses and chariots were prime targets for seizure after conflicts with Asians. Early in the history of the horse in Egypt, the two victory stelae of Kamose record his attack on the Hyksos, how the enemy's horses fled when his armies approached, and that he captured their horses. The records of Thutmose III's campaigns, in the Hall of Annals, in the Temple of Amun, at Karnak, describe his booty from 14 campaigns in various parts of Asia. Horses and chariots were taken in significant numbers, but never as great as when he fought at Megiddo (Map 9) on his first campaign, circa 1457 BCE. The battle was between the Egyptian forces, under Thutmose III's direction, and a coalition of Canaanites under King Durusha, of Qadesh (Map 9), near the Orontes river.

After laying siege to the fortress for seven months, it is recorded that Thutmose III seized 2,041 mares, 191 foals, 6 stallions and 924 chariots, along with armor, bows, cattle and sheep. The discrepancy between the numbers of mares and stallions perhaps reflects the heavy losses that occurred during the battle and the fact that he was taking their breeding herds. The accounting records found in Thutmose III's annals are important for two reasons. First, they inform about how he and other pharaohs enhanced their own military to the detriment of their enemies through the spoils of victory, but, second, they provide evidence for the sources of the proto-Arabian horses that suddenly appear in Egyptian art. The fact that the rash of New Kingdom campaigns in the Levant, or Retjenu, as the Egyptians called it, coincide with the appearance of the proto-Arabian in Egypt's heartland may contribute to our understanding of the origin of the Arabian horse.

The Amarna Correspondence, cuneiform tablets (Cat. #115) mostly written in the Akkadian language, were diplomatic communications between Asian rulers (kings of Babylonia, Assyria, Hatti, and Mitanni, and other more minor rulers or vassals of Egypt) and the Egyptian government during the New Kingdom, between the latter years of Amenhotep III's reign until 1332 BCE, when Tutankhamun moved the capital to Luxor and closed the Amarna archive. Typically, they send a greeting to the king expressing hope that he, his family, house, chariots, horses, armies, and possessions will be well. The letters reiterate that chariots and horses were very highly valued, particularly for military purposes. Requests were made to the king for 10, 20, 30 or 50 pairs of horses, most likely teams for chariots.

The *Papyrus Anastasi I* (BM 10247) is a satirical text composed during the Ramesside period (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Dynasties). It was written by an army scribe by the name of Hori about another scribe/messenger called Amenemope who was rather inept in handling horses. The purpose of the text was apparently to serve as a lesson about the dangers of incompetence in managing chariot horses over difficult terrain and with poorly fastened harnesses.

These are just a few texts that exemplify the value of this line of evidence in understanding the roles of the horse in Egypt. As most references to horses and chariotry occur in elite documents, it must be acknowledged that the textual profile of the horse is shaped by the needs of those for whom they were written. Thus, these idealized written portraits, like the tomb images, need to be evaluated with appropriate caution.

## Ancient Egyptian Chariots and Tack

Investigation of the vehicles and horse tack used in ancient times can provide abundant information about the function of the horse, including riding and driving, technological sophistication of the culture, skills in equitation, ethical treatment and status of the horse, and even the animal's size. The design and development of tack and vehicles can also elucidate contacts and influences from neighboring cultures.

Egyptians used both bitless bridles that relied on issuing control through the noseband, as well as metal bits. Ancient metal bits generally preserve far better than the leather straps of headstalls, even though the dry climate in Egypt does allow for excellent preservation of perishable materials. Fortunately, artistic representations are so detailed that it is possible to reconstruct Egyptian bridles with great accuracy.

The earliest well-dated metal bit from a good context in the Near East comes from Tel Haror (Map 9), in the northern Negev and dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It was found in place on the remains of a donkey. With its single bar mouthpiece and wheel-shaped cheekpieces, it resembles bits from Tell el-Ajjul, in Gaza, as well as ones from Syria and Iraq, all of which probably date to around the middle of the second millennium BCE. The cheekpieces on these driving bits have short spikes that press on the horse's cheek when the reins are pulled on the opposite side, causing the animal to turn its head to avoid discomfort. This gives the driver, who is at some distance, good lateral control. At Tell el-Amarna (Map 9), a bit with a jointed mouthpiece and oblong cheekpieces with two small spikes each was found. The earliest examples of jointed canons date to around the 15<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century BCE, so, given this date, they were probably for use on chariot horses rather than for riding.

The earliest known actual remains of chariots are from New Kingdom Egypt, 15<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Mary Littauer and Joost Crouwel have carefully examined all of the evidence for Egyptian chariots, including a very detailed study of Tutankhamun's six dismantled chariots from his tomb's antechamber. Because of their analysis of real chariots and the existence of large numbers of artistic representations,



(Fig. 15) Detail of Fig. 11, showing blinker on a chariot horse, depicted in a carved and painted wall relief at Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple of Ramesses III. Luxor, West Bank.

Photo by Sandra L. Olsen

we have a very accurate understanding of how Egyptians manufactured their streamlined, lightweight, speedy vehicles.

The Egyptian chariot had the following features: a rear-positioned axle and wide wheelbase (1.5-1.8 m) for stability; four- to six-spoked wheels of nearly a meter in diameter that revolved freely on the axle; a long draft pole (about 2.5 m); and a yoke curved to fit over the contours of the two horses. The box was D-shaped and made on a bentwood frame with a hip-high screen that protected the driver in front and wrapped around to the sides, but was open in back in order to step in and out easily. The sides of the screen could be either enclosed or fenestrated. The screen could be made of woven material or rawhide stretched over the frame. Sometimes gesso was applied over the foundation of the screen and gold or silver foil could cover the gesso. The floor of the box was made of interwoven rawhide bands, laced into the frame to hold them securely. Nearly all parts of the royal chariot could be gilded.

The exquisite preservation of thousands of perishable artifacts inside the tomb of 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty king Tutankhamun has left the strongest legacy for Egyptian horse tack, in addition to chariots. Ornate pairs of wooden blinkers overlain with gold sheet and inlaid with colored glass depicting *udjat*, or

the eyes of Horus, and lotus blossoms were found among the harnesses near Tutankhamun's chariots. Littauer and Crouwel suggest that they protected the eyes from missiles and may have deterred eruptions between the stallions in a team. Blinkers appear in art from the time of Amenophis II, but they were not universal (Fig. 15).

Although saddles were late arrivals to Egypt, cloth covers are often depicted in art on the backs of both driven and ridden horses. The horse reputedly owned by Senenmut, Queen Hatshepsut's (reign 1473-1458 BCE) vizier, was buried in front of her mortuary temple in the West Bank of Luxor wearing a linen cloth with leather girth bands attached.

Ornamentation for horses is a source of information on the status of the horse. Much of it is visible in artistic representations in various media, but actual examples also exist. The best ones come from horse graves in Nubia. Despite the high value placed on chariot horses by the Egyptians and the fact that chariots could accompany the pharaoh in his tomb for use in the Afterlife, interring horses was not a typical practice for them.

Nubia had long been a blessing and a curse for the Egyptians. It was an important source of gold and copper, but control over the region had gone back and forth through the centuries. That power struggle was shifting in favor of the Kushite Empire from around 1069 BCE, the end of the Ramesside period.

Beginning in 1918, archaeologist George Reisner and his team from Harvard excavated the royal cemetery for the Kingdom of Kush, at el-Kurru (Map 9), 12 km downstream from their capital of Napata. The earliest known burials of Kushite kings, those from the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, are at el-Kurru. The Kushites would later move their royal cemetery from el-Kurru to Nuri, and back, and then to Meroe.

In addition to the pyramids of the early Kushite kings, Reisner opened the graves of 24 royal horses, located 200 m away (Fig. 16, 17, Cat. #120). These are interpreted as the chariot horses of the kings, and cartouches placed with them identify the owners of the horses.

The treatment of these horses is unique. There are four rows of individual graves, with four graves in the first and fourth rows and eight in the second and third rows. The horses were buried upright with slots dug down to a lower level for each foot and earthen supports for the head and stomach. Their heads all faced northeast.

The artifacts found in these animal graves are some of the finest examples of horse ornamentation known in this region. Examples include hundreds of beads and pendants of bronze, faience and shell, including ones classified as ball, openwork barrel, ring, Eye of Horus (*wedjat*), Hathor, jasmine blossom, and cowrie beads. These were once strung in large numbers, apparently to be worn around the necks of the horses as breast adornment. In some cases, the strings were still partially preserved. One of the most beautiful pieces found in a horse grave at el-Kurru is a gold plume holder for a bridle that has the effigy of a falcon's head with a disc and uraeus on a papyrus capital. Apparently, this piece would have been worn between the ears of the horse. Leather headstalls might not have been preserved, however the hard parts of bridles, such as strap sliders, rein rings, bits, or other pieces of tack would,

and these did not accompany any of the horses. Horse remains were also found in the stairwells of the kings' tombs.

As in the earlier royal cemetery at el-Kurru, horses were buried inside the royal tombs at Ballana and Qustul (Roman period, 50-150 CE), which are also in Nubia. Accompanying the horses, there were silver bridles, saddles, jeweled horse collars, and other tack. A bronze lamp from Ballana (Cat. #121) (Map 9) has a very realistic horse's head at the end of the handle.

## Archaeological Features Relating To Raising and Maintaining Horses

Horse keeping and training may be detectable in the archaeological record in certain recognizable architectural features, like stables, tack rooms, and tracks. These areas and structures can elucidate maintenance conditions, numbers of horses kept, and their distribution. There are many such places that are interpreted as stable blocks adjacent to Egyptian palaces and estates, as well as military posts with stabling, such as the one at Akhenaten's capital, Tell el-Amarna.

Long after the Hyksos were expelled, Tell el-Dab'a became the capital of Ramesses II (reign 1279-1213 BCE). Known as Piramesses, it was strategically located for military staging against the Hittites and Shasu nomads; most of Ramesses' army was stationed there. He also commissioned the Royal Chariotry, an enormous complex of stables to house hundreds of military horses, as well as workshops for constructing chariots and manufacturing arms there. Ornamented with royal insignia on their stone lintels, the stables at Piramesses confirm the long-held view that the horse was largely a king's prerogative in Egypt. The stables also offer evidence for the provisioning and care of the animals. One designed to accommodate up to 460 horses was recently excavated. Inside, the archaeologists found a series of small cisterns, positioned to serve as toilets when the horses were tethered, keeping the floor clean and dry.

At Kom al-Abd, near the palace of Amenhotep III at Malkata, on the West Bank at Luxor, there is an area cleared of stones measuring 4 km by 120 m that has been interpreted as a run for training charioteers and horses. Near it was a rest house and possible grandstand for viewing. Unlike the Greeks and Romans, the Egyptians did not leave behind records of equestrian sporting competitions, but training and demonstrations by sellers to buyers may have required runs and arenas.

## Conclusions

Egypt provides scholars with a wealth of information about the chariot as a means of conveyance for members of the elite, for the hunt and in battle. The horse, as a foreign introduction, held a position in Egyptian society very different from other livestock and indigenous fauna. Prevented from membership in the religious belief system, it nevertheless had a position of high status.

It is in Egypt, during the New Kingdom, that we find the first indications of the development of the Arabian horse. However, because it appears relatively suddenly and records indicate that large numbers of horses were being brought in from Syria-Palestine as war booty, future research into the origins of this beautiful breed should explore Southwest Asia in more detail.



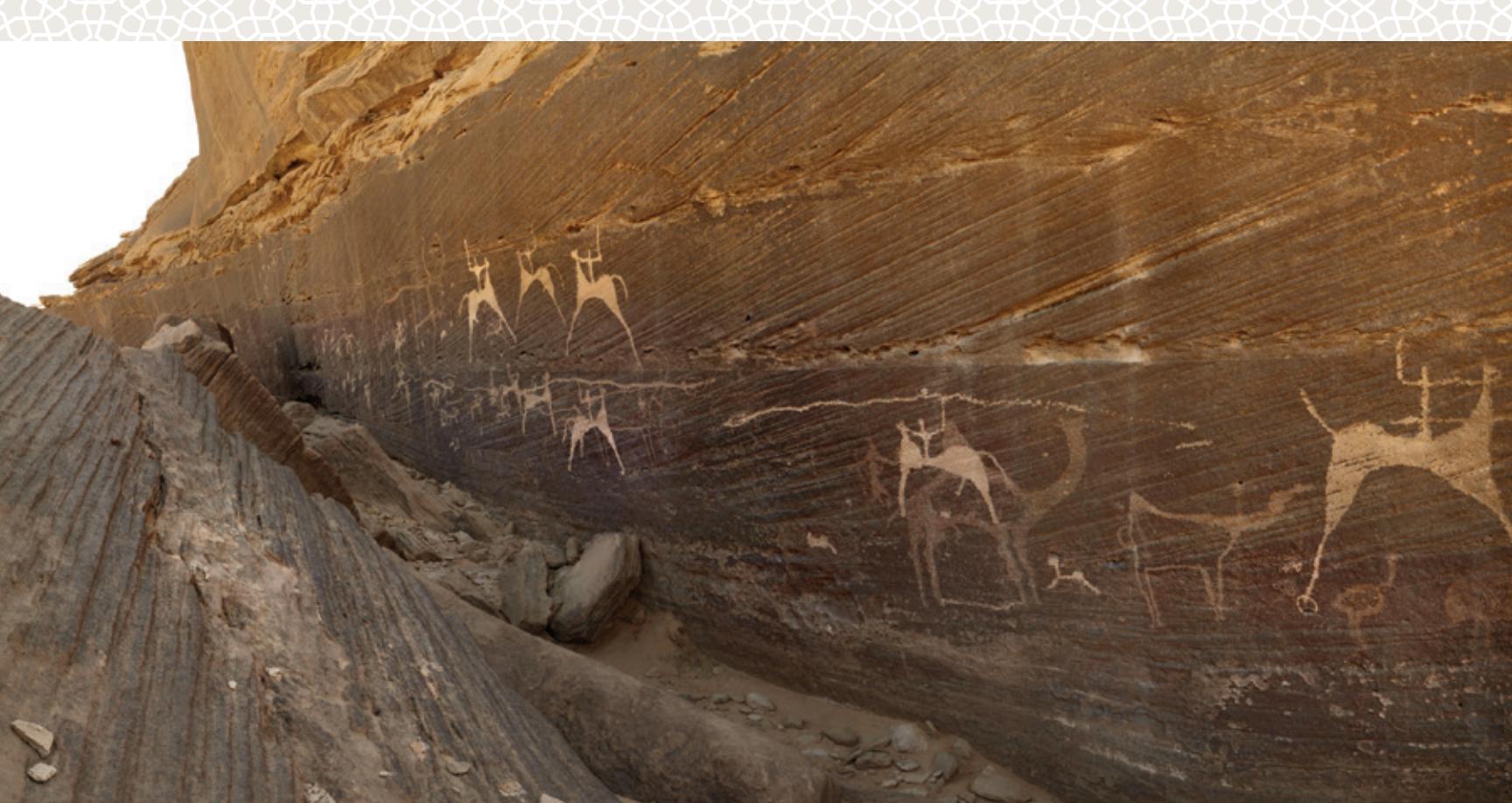
(Fig. 16) Excavations by George Reisner at el-Kurru, Sudan, revealing the opened 24 horse burials associated with the tombs of the Kushite kings.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

(Fig. 17) Example of one of the horse burials at el-Kurru. The horses were interred as whole carcasses outfitted with fine breast ornaments. The skulls of the animals were first thought to have been removed before the carcasses were placed in their graves, but the presence of teeth suggests that the crania were just poorly preserved.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





(Fig. 18) Painted Bull Mural  
at Bi'r Hima, southern Saudi  
Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant

### CHAPTER 3

# The Horse in Arabia: THE EARLY TIMES



## The Early Equids in the Arabian Peninsula

According to our current knowledge, the domesticated horse made a relatively late appearance on the Arabian Peninsula. For environmental reasons, before the Arabian horse breed was developed, this region was not conducive to the survival and breeding of horses once the recent desertification occurred. Camels and donkeys have fared much better and were used more extensively than the horse. In addition, the ancestor of the domestic horse, the tarpan, or European wild horse, *Equus ferus*, probably never intruded very far south into the peninsula.

The Arabian Peninsula has not been a desert continuously through time, so climatic fluctuations have played an enormous role in determining whether horses could thrive there. The last 10,000 years of the Pleistocene epoch, or Ice Age, were marked by hyperaridity. In the early Holocene, or Recent epoch, the climate began to turn considerably more humid, beginning around 7000 BCE. During the Holocene Wet Phase there were periodic climate swings, but sometime between 4000-2500 BCE, the region returned to a state of intense aridity.

The fauna of the Arabian Peninsula reflects its proximity to the African continent and Southwest Asia. This is very clear in some of the older examples of petroglyphs, or rock art, particularly in northern Saudi Arabia. Animals that are depicted with considerable frequency in rock art created during the Holocene Wet Phase include: the extinct large African bovid *Pelorovis*; oryx; gazelle; ibex; African wild ass or Asian onager; canid (jackal, fox, or wolf); hyena; cheetah; lion; and ostrich (Fig. 19). Two sites that have excellent examples of images from this time period are Jubbah and Shuwaymis, near the modern city of Ha'il, in northern Saudi Arabia (Map 10). After intensive desertification and the impact of hunting by humans, the species remaining today are a mere relict of the diverse fauna that once roamed this region.

(Fig. 19) Neolithic petroglyph mural, showing a range of animals, including the extinct large bovid *Pelorovis*, two cheetahs, and an ibex, from the Holocene Wet Phase, prior to 4000-2500 BCE, Shuwaymis, northern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant





**(Map 10) The Arabian Peninsula, showing major archaeological sites.**

**(Fig. 20) Graffiti Rocks**  
petroglyph panel showing a compact composition of a diverse array of animal species and humans from after the Holocene Wet Phase 140 km southwest of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant



Assigning dates to these petroglyphs is extremely difficult, since they are often either unassociated with ancient campsites or are surrounded by sites from a variety of periods. However, it is possible to distinguish the early group, referred to as Neolithic (New Stone Age), from more recent examples on the basis of patina, method of carving, and the range of species depicted. Later rock art tends to be more shallowly scratched through the dark desert varnish, and is dominated by camels, cavalrymen on horseback, goddesses (in the south), and writing. Date palms and ostriches also appear with frequency after the Wet Phase terminated. A mural at Graffiti Rocks (Fig. 20, Map 10), southwest of Riyadh, in central Saudi Arabia, is unusual in showing a densely compressed scene of a variety of animals and humans from long after the Wet Phase. In studying this panel, however, one gets the impression that different artists

added individual images progressively through time until the entire surface was completely filled.

When examining the Arabian petroglyphs, the older, deeply incised ones illustrate hunting scenes in which men carrying bows are facing wild game. Hunting dogs, the only domesticated animal portrayed at this time, are sometimes shown contributing their support. The equids that can be unambiguously identified are asses or onagers (Fig. 21), and there is no indication that they are domesticated. In fact, they are sometimes shown as the hunter's prey.

The equids in the Arabian Peninsula during the Wet Phase could have been African wild asses, *Equus africanus*, or onagers, *Equus hemionus*; it is difficult to distinguish them on bone fragments and only some parts of their skeletons are separable in any case. The most likely onager was known as the Syrian wild ass (*Equus hemionus hemippus*), which went extinct in 1927. It was documented in Syria, Jordan, and Iraq in historic times. The donkey, *Equus asinus*, was domesticated from the African wild ass in Egypt around 3,000 years ago, but, like the horse, it is not known when this animal was introduced into the peninsula by people.

It should be understood upfront that from a prehistorian's point of view, the Arabian Peninsula is largely *terra incognita*, and much work remains to be done before we can truly understand when and from which direction the domesticated horse entered. In general, animal bones are absent from sites altogether or poorly preserved in very small numbers. This is one reason why rock art is so important in elucidating ancient fauna.

One of the earliest possible pieces of evidence for the horse, presumably wild, comes from north of the true peninsula, at the settlement of Abu Hureyra (Map 1), on the Euphrates, in Syria. There, a single horse bone (humerus) was found in a layer dating to 7400–5000 BCE. However, the bone itself was not radiocarbon dated, so there is always a chance that it had slipped down into this layer from a later deposit.

It will be recalled from discussion in the previous chapters that the horse was domesticated in the Eurasian steppe, definitively before 3500 BCE, and to have made its way to Syria and Mesopotamia by around 2500 BCE. Although domesticated horses would have been able to enter the Arabian Peninsula at this time, the climate was probably already too severe in much of the region to easily sustain this northern species. It would take another 1,000 years and the development of the proto-Arabian breed before there were horses



adapted to such extreme heat.

Domesticated horses arrived in Egypt about 1600 BCE, but were kept in very small numbers in the Nile delta and along the river. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, horse breeding was done for the Egyptians and the Assyrians in southern Nubia, where it was possible to have pastures even some distance from the Nile floodplain. The success of the horse in the Near East and Egypt relied on the development of the proto-Arabian breed, which possessed a variety of physical adaptations that allowed it to live and work in extremely hot and arid environments. The earliest evidence for this is around the time of Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III (1479-1425 BCE), and his source was probably in the region of Syria-Palestine. This may be the turning point after which it is reasonable to look for the horse moving into the Arabian Peninsula.

## Arabia and its Near Eastern Connections

Around 5300 BCE, sites appear in the eastern part of the peninsula that equate to the southern Mesopotamian Ubaid culture. In Mesopotamia, Ubaid farmers thrived from 5300-4000 BCE, growing wheat, barley and other grain with the use of irrigation; herding cattle, sheep and goats; making geometrically decorated pottery; and eventually working copper. They lived in both small and large settlements with homes of mudbrick.

In 1968, pottery was found in sites in eastern Arabia that appeared to be of the Ubaid style. Since that time, this identification has been confirmed by more discoveries. Dating to the very beginning of the Ubaid, Ain Qannas and Dosariyah (Map 10) are two examples that have yielded small collections of animal bones. Of the 23 bone fragments found at Ain Qannas, 20 were identified as equid (presumably wild ass or onager), with the other bones being from large and small bovids. Mollusks, but no fish bones, were also recovered. At the other site, Dosariyah, the 184 animal bones indicate an economy dependent on hunting and herding, with domestic cattle and goats dominating, significant numbers of gazelle, and a small portion of equids. It is interesting to note that domestic livestock had reached eastern Arabia by at least 5000 BCE. The Ubaid culture disappeared rather abruptly from eastern Arabia and Oman, around 3800 BCE, about the same time that the lakes began to dry and dunes expanded.

Ancient communities along the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and in Bahrain indicate that communication with Mesopotamia and Iran was sustained after the Ubaid, however. The large number of maritime fishing villages along the coast of Oman dating to 3500-3000 BCE provides evidence for the feasibility of traffic across the Gulf. Artifacts in eastern Arabia similar to those of the Sumerian, Babylonian, Kassite and Assyrian cultures, as well as Babylonian and Assyrian texts, substantiate the cross-cultural connections. Copper was one of the chief commodities coming from Arabia that was in demand in the Near East, while a variety of goods traveled in the opposite direction. Trade and the introduction into Arabia of domestic grain crops, cattle, sheep, and goats mean that it is certainly possible that domestic horses could have entered the Arabian Peninsula along the eastern coast, anytime after about 2500 BCE. Even more enticing are claims for artifacts resembling those from Luristan, where nomadic horsemen produced elaborate zoomorphic cheekpieces, and Mittani, the region that produced the writers of the Kikkuli chariot horse training texts. Knowing that it was possible for the horse to have been introduced is not proof that it happened, however, and to date direct evidence that the horse entered before the Christian era is still wanting.

One of the most intriguing clues about the possible encroachment of the horse into northern Arabia comes from petroglyphs. Difficult to date except on the basis of style, there are examples of pairs of horses pulling chariots that resemble images in Bronze Age rock art found from Scandinavia to Mongolia, across all of Central Asia, and more proximately in Jordan. This style of presentation is an “aerial” view of the chariot box and pole, with wheels appearing to be laid flat and the horses lying back to back. There is one such chariot petroglyph (Fig. 22) in the area of Jubbah.

(Fig. 21) Neolithic petroglyph of a wild ass or onager at Shuwaymis, northern Saudi Arabia. Notice the hunter with bow and arrow on the right and the hunting dogs surrounding the equid. The artist failed to finish removing all the surface stone inside the outline of the equid. He started on the head and then for some reason never completed the image.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant



(Fig. 22) Petroglyph of team of two horses pulling a chariot, Jubbah, northern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant

Although it may not be prudent to place too much emphasis on the artist's choice of style, it is a rather peculiar canon that chooses to dismantle the chariot in this way and view it from above. Mary Littauer wisely commented on its similarity to the view one would have, if standing on the ground above, of an open Bronze Age burial tumulus in which a pair of horses and a chariot of the deceased were placed. The lack of a driver in the chariot may support this theory. Such Bronze Age burials occur across the Eurasian steppe and into China.

Several things can be seen in the chariot depiction at Jubbah. First, the one horse that has the head preserved seems to have a convex facial profile and there are no "Arabian" characteristics in

the neck, back, croup, or tail. Its ears are small and both equids have long tails, indicating that they are not donkeys. Second, the vehicle is pulled by a team of two horses, which was more typical through time than the later four-horse teams. Third, at least one of the horses was a stallion and the other is ambiguous. Most ancient artists depicting horses pulling chariots are careful to indicate the sex of the animals as male. Fourth, the chariot wheels have four slender spokes, which means it was a lightweight chariot probably from before the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Fifth, the style is very similar to that shown across Eurasia in the Bronze Age. Based on all of these criteria, the date of the Jubbah chariot petroglyph would appear to be between 1800-1200 BCE, or Middle to Late Bronze Age, as it would be called in Syria-Palestine. The presence of artwork does not guarantee that actual horses and chariots were in this region, only that the artist who etched them was aware of their existence or had been taught to make this reproduction by someone who had seen them.

The Jubbah chariot petroglyph differs significantly from presumably later ones, like one found in a petroglyph at Tabuk (Map 10), also in northern Saudi Arabia. The Tabuk chariot scene is accompanied by Thamudic B writing, but the two may not be contemporaneous, and the confusion over the age of this script does not assist in dating this chariot very precisely. Thamudic script is a variant of the South Arabian script used for a Semitic language found in northern Arabia and the Sinai. The oldest reference to the Thamudic people is in an Assyrian inscription of King Sargon II dated to 715 BCE, but they survived until the time of Muhammad. The Tabuk chariot, similar to ones shown in 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE Assyrian bas-reliefs, is depicted in profile; has 8-spoked wheels; and carries a driver and an archer. The rendering of the horses is a bit odd, because the legs are disproportionately long, as if the artist was not using an actual horse for his model, but drawing from memory, or he was unfamiliar with the horse. The point here is that the Jubbah chariot relates more closely in style to hundreds of Bronze Age images found over a wide swath of Eurasia than it does to ones dating to the first millennium BCE, like the one at Tabuk. Therefore, the Jubbah chariot petroglyph may be the oldest evidence for the horse, as well as a two-wheeled vehicle, in the Arabian Peninsula.

(Fig. 23) Mural of camels, Shuwaymis, northern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant



## The Spice Trade and Ancient Travel

The spice trade and the great travels that it prompted connected the Arabian Peninsula to the Near East, Egypt, and Mediterranean Europe in ways unprecedented in the past. Long considered remote, elusive, and difficult, this mysterious land was transformed into the subject of poetry

and prose by writers and the object of desire by kings and nobility far and wide. The fragrances of the gods moved from their homeland in southern Arabia not on the backs of beautiful Arabian horses, however, but on the more suitable vehicle of the great desert, the camel. The camel, vividly immortalized in stone at Shuwaymis, in northern Saudi Arabia (Fig. 23), still holds onto its high status and value today (Fig. 24). Camel caravan routes (Map 11) spanned the whole length and breadth of the Arabian Peninsula, carrying the promise of lifting the spirits of faraway strangers with the delicate fragrances of southern Arabia. By 1500 BCE, the scribes of Egypt and Mesopotamia were writing of their use of frankincense, myrrh and other aromatics in festivals and religious ceremonies.

The Old Testament First Book of Kings, recounts the visit to Jerusalem of the Queen of Sheba, where she met with King Solomon (reign beginning about 972 BCE). She was reported to have brought him 120 talents of gold, as well as great quantities of spices and precious stones by camel caravan.

Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (reign 744-727 BCE) bragged about his gains taken by force from Queen Samsi of Arabia:

As for Samsi, Queen of Arabia, I took from her 1,000 prisoners, 30,000 camels, 20,000 oxen, 5,000 measures of spices of all kinds, and she fled for her life, like a wild ass, to the waterless town of Bazu. The people of Mas'a, Tema, Saba', Haiappa, Badana, Hatti, and the tribe of Idiba'leans from far away to the west, knew of my power and bowed to my rule. As one, they brought me tribute: male and female camels and all kinds of spices.

His successors Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon, all demanded increasingly greater tribute from Arabia, including aromatics, gold, and precious stones.

Solomon accepted gifts from the Queen of Sheba, Assyrian kings received tribute from the Arabian kingdom of Saba', and hundreds of years later, the Greeks and Romans traded with the kingdom of Sabaea, in southern Arabia, the source of the highly coveted aromatic spices. Saba', Sheba, and Sabaea were slightly different names for the same kingdom, whose capital Ma'rib (Map 10) was located east of the modern city of Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. It was a kingdom made wealthy on the trade of its fragrant commodity to the rest of the known world. Frankincense and myrrh served a variety of functions to major empires in the Classical World. Egyptians used them for embalming, the East and West alike considered them important elements in religious ceremonies, from Rome to Persia they served as medicinal treatments, and royalty everywhere sought possession of them to perfume their palaces.

Southern Arabia, from before the time of Solomon, was recognized as the source for a range of plants that produced desirable fragrances. Some of the most famous writers of their times recorded their impressions about the origin of these aromatic spices and how they were collected, including Ezekiel, Sappho, Herodotus, and Pliny. Agatharchides, a geographer to the Ptolemies in Egypt, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, described the



(Fig. 24) Bedouin black camels in Bi'r Hima, southern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant

(Map 11) Map of the Spice Trade Routes.



abundance and variety of southern Arabia's prized resources, including balsam, frankincense, myrrh, dates, cinnamon, and sambac (jasmine). He was obviously swept off his feet when he recounted the atmosphere of the region:

One can never recognize any single spice because of the overwhelming power of the mingled fragrance given off by all of them together. The aroma strikes and stirs the senses of every visitor: it seems divine, beyond the power of words.

Because of its importance in this trade, southern Arabia became known to the Romans as Arabia Felix, or Arabia the Blessed. There were two major reasons why Arabia Felix became so valuable to the rest of the known world. First, it was the only place in the world where frankincense (an aromatic resin obtained from the *Boswellia sacra* tree) could be grown, and second, this rare substance had become crucial to religious ceremonies. In the Old Testament, Moses received divine instruction to burn incense in the temple in Jerusalem (*Exodus 30:34*). In its time, frankincense was considered to be as precious as gold, and of much more restricted accessibility. The center for its production was the region of Hadhramaut, along the Gulf of Aden in the Arabian Sea from Yemen eastward to Oman (Map 10, 11).

Sabaea traded not only their own aromatics, but also spices obtained from other regions, such as cassia, which is similar to cinnamon. All of these were transported by camel caravan along time-worn trade routes northward across the Arabian desert to Mesopotamia, the eastern Mediterranean ports, and Egypt via Palestine (Map 11). The Sabaean kingdom was largely destroyed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE when a large dam that controlled the water system for the groves of trees that produced frankincense and myrrh burst at Ma'rib, its capital.

## Al-Okhhood: A Stop on the Spice Trail

Camel caravan trade from southern Arabia to Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt, and the Mediterranean led to large numbers of cities springing up along their routes. One such settlement was Najran, which still thrives today in southwestern Saudi Arabia, on the Yemen border. Najran is situated in a wadi surrounded by mountains on three sides and the edge of the Rub' al-Khali, or Empty Quarter, on the east. Its high water table makes it suitable for agriculture, allowing local farmers in the past, as today, to grow grain, dates, and citrus fruits. Here, the Old City, Al-Okhhood, was founded sometime before 600 BCE, and it soon became a major crossroads where several caravan routes intersected (Fig. 25, Map 11).

In the main avenue leading into this impressive citadel, a horse in profile is chiseled into one of the large building blocks of the wall that lines the avenue (Fig. 25, 26). The horse has a convex facial profile, strong neck, full chest and croup, and a low-set tail. The artist has made the legs somewhat short in proportion to the length of the body. It has a heavy build that is reminiscent of the Nisean breed the Achaemenid Persians used (550-330 BCE). Perhaps the most interesting thing about this image is the horn on the horse's forehead. Horned horses date back to the Bronze Age at the Tamgaly

petroglyphs in Kazakhstan, and depictions of unicorns later spread all the way to Britain as symbols of royalty. Alexander the Great's horse was called Bucephalus, or Bull-head, because he was supposed to have bosses on his forehead, like the Nisean horses had. These would not have amounted to projections as prominent as horns, but analogies seem to have been made. Unfortunately, although the carving looks authentic, it is not possible to assign a specific date to it. Its patina is less well-developed than the neighboring intertwined snake symbol to the left of it, suggesting that it was not carved at the time the wall was built, but rather was added later.

Between 500 BCE-622 CE, Najran was one of the important links in the frankincense and perfume trade from Hadhramaut to northern and central Arabia. In 24-25 BCE, a Roman expedition under Aelius Gallus came to Najran to attempt to gain control over the trade routes, but failed. The last conquest of the city was by the Himyarites in 250 CE.

(Fig. 25) Al-Okhhood, the Old City at Najran, southern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Sandra L. Olsen



## The Horses and High Society of Qaryat al-Fau

Located in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, Qaryat al-Fau (Map 10) was another important commerce center on the caravan trade route from southern Arabia, through Najran, to Mesopotamia. The town was located at a pass through the Tuwaiq mountains, in central Saudi Arabia, where it meets with the Wadi al-Dawasir, at the northwestern edge of the Rub' al-Khali. Originally known as Dhu Kahl, the settlement was founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, but it grew significantly when it became the capital of the Kindah kingdom, from 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE-4<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Kindah came to this place when their tribe left the Sabaean kingdom. At that time, three tribes split off - the other two being the Muntherids, who established their new kingdom in southern Iraq, and the Ghassanids, who settled in Syria.

Abdulrahman al-Ansary, the lead archaeologist who excavated at Qaryat al-Fau between 1974-1994, uncovered two major parts of the town: a residential area that included a large market, houses, streets and squares; and the sacred part, with temples and tombs. Its rich array of artifacts and its delicate frescoes elucidate the importance of the horse during this period better than any other place in the Arabian Peninsula.

Al-Ansary recognized several stages in the development of art at Qaryat al-Fau. In the first phase, circa the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, artists produced petroglyphs outside of town with inscriptions, battle scenes, dancers, date palms, and a variety of wild and domesticated animals.

In the second phase, around the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, these images were brought inside the town and drawn on the walls of buildings, including both residences and temples.

By the third phase, al-Ansary believes that the art was commissioned by the wealthy and produced by an artisan class. A favorite scene is that of camels being hunted by men on horseback who wield long lances. These are all painted on the walls using black and red mineral pigments.

In the fourth phase, late 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, the artists produced large polychrome frescoes on the walls of structures. These are evocative of contemporaneous paintings in the Near Eastern and Greco-Roman traditions. The scenes on these frescoes are more elaborate than previous art and provide rich insight into the daily lives of the upper class of Qaryat al-Fau. For example, one fresco on the wall of a residential villa of nobility shows three persons, two standing and one reclining on a couch, holding a glass. A horse wearing a bridle with possible rectangular metal studs on the straps and ornate breast ornaments is standing beside the resting figure. The person to the left of the horse wears a crown and necklace. The wardrobes and hairstyles of the people are depicted in considerable detail. Another fragment of a fresco preserves a horse's back with a colorful saddle (Cat. #133), while yet another shows the feet of horses crossing a stream full of fish (Cat. #132).

An exquisitely formed bronze couch finial in the form of a horse's head and neck (Cat. #135) and a tiny gilded bronze figurine of a rearing horse (Cat. # 134) indicate that by this time the Arabian horse breed had developed its characteristic features.

The couch finial is from the tomb of Sa'd ibn Malik, obviously a man of good standing in his community to have such elegant tomb furnishings. The piece shows a number of interesting characteristics that indicate that it must have been a prestige item. The craftsmanship is of the highest caliber. The horse is shown in a very animated and realistic pose. The manufacture of this piece is complex, it was made by brazing multiple pieces of bronze together, and then it was covered in gilt. The horse itself carried a great deal of status, but to elevate it even more, it is wearing the skin of a felid, probably a leopard, around its neck. The head of a Roman deity, most likely Artemis, that is attached to the end opposite the horse suggests that either a local artisan was Roman, or that it was made in Rome and imported. Since the name of the owner is obviously Arabic, this piece may have been valued for its exotic nature.

The elegant rearing horse figurine is similar to many others found in South Arabia about the same time, between the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Often they carry inscriptions indicating that they were votive offerings to a particular god in the name of the horse's owner to assure the health of both the owner and his horse. Placed in a temple, they were to serve as reminders of the request. This particular one is extremely realistic and lively.

From Qaryat al-Fau, we can deduce many details about the use of horses, their status, appearance,



(Fig. 26) A possible Nisean horse chiseled into a building block near the entrance of Al-Okhdoor citadel.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant

and tack. From the early petroglyphs and wall paintings, we know that horses were ridden in camel hunts and in battle by cavalrymen brandishing long lances. The association of the horse with nobility in frescoes and the use of a horse head on a fine piece of furniture speak to its high standing in society. The multi-colored saddle, bridle with studded straps, and elaborate breast ornament depicted on the horses in the frescoes show that at least the mounts of nobility were fashionably equipped. And, finally, features on the two bronze horse models indicate that the Arabian horse was a distinctive breed present in the region at that time.

## Mysterious Kingdom of the Nabataeans: The North End of the Spice Trail

One of the most successful powers in the spice trade was the Nabataean Kingdom, which is known to have arrived in the vicinity of their future capital of Petra (Jordan) around the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. They endured until Roman emperor Tragan annexed the Nabataean kingdom in 106 CE. The ancestry of the Nabataeans is disputed, but it is known that they began as consummate desert nomads who could travel through, and take refuge in, some of the most arid places in the world. In the first century BCE, they were mentioned by Greek historian Diodorus, who was citing an even older description of the Nabataeans by one of Alexander the Great's officers. For centuries the Nabataeans eschewed any form of settlement or agriculture in favor of mobility. However, within perhaps as little as 200 years, they transformed into a wealthy empire of traders with a beautiful capital hewn in red sandstone at Petra (Jordan). The Nabataean Kingdom at its maximum incorporated the Sinai, Jordan, the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia and the north of that country.

Beginning as nomadic pastoralists with camels and sheep, surviving almost completely on meat and milk, the Nabataeans thwarted others who would seek to control them by fleeing into the deep desert. Their survival depended on their ingenious ability to dig enormous cisterns with small mouths into bedrock and then conceal them from all but the knowing.

As the frankincense trade began to develop, the Nabataeans increasingly gained control over the caravan trade routes in the north. Their superior hydraulic engineering and control over water storage allowed them to forge shorter transport routes through long expanses of desert impossible for others. Soon, they were the main traders with the Mediterranean of products coming up from South Arabia.

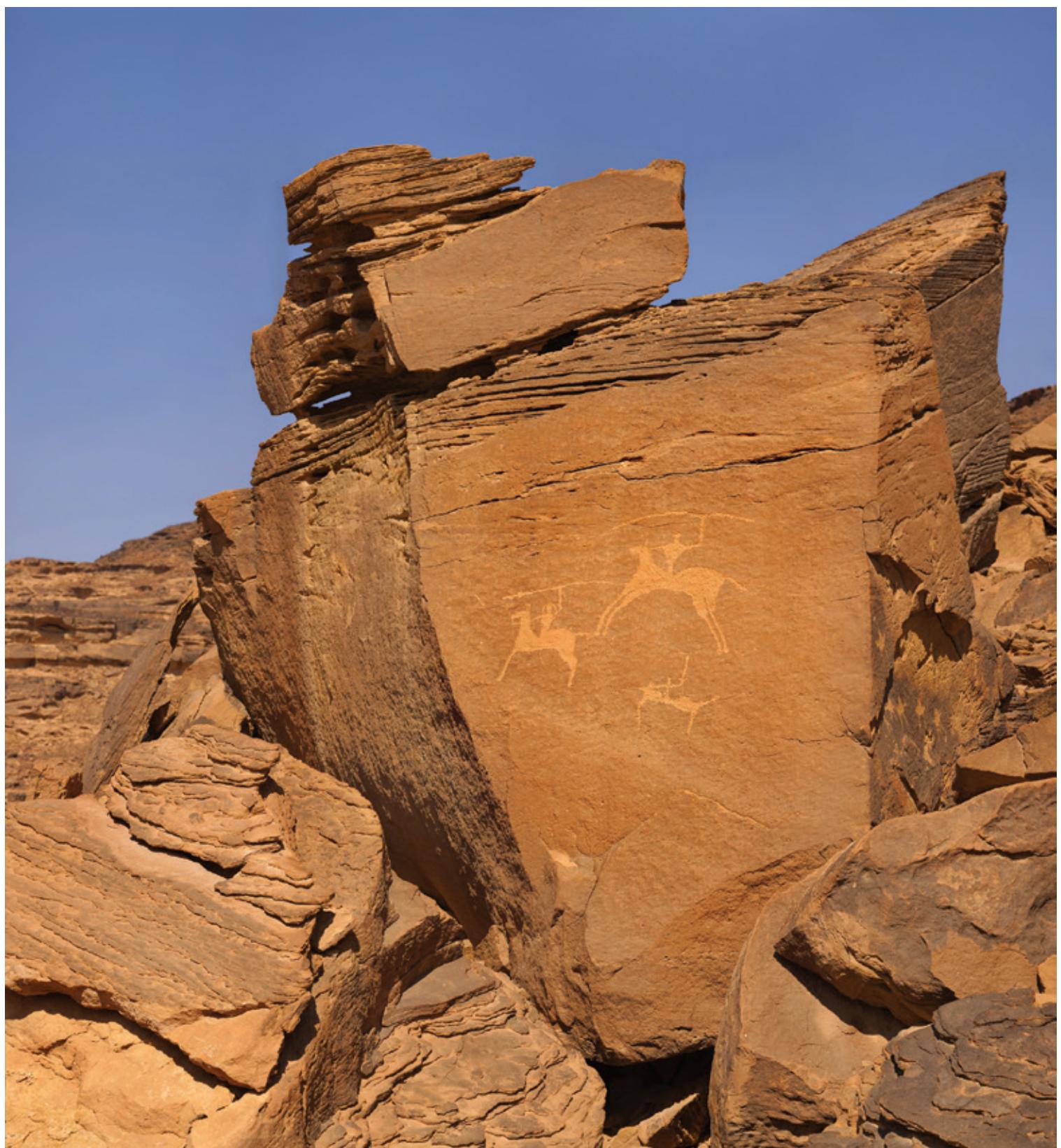
One of their major centers and the most southerly settlement of their kingdom was Hegra, which today is called Mada'in Saleh (Map 11). Although smaller than Petra, its temples and tomb facades are also beautifully hewn in sandstone. From Hegra north to Petra and the Mediterranean, the Nabataeans had complete control of the trade routes.

For the most part, the Nabataeans were primarily traders rather than warriors, but they did have their army of cameleers to defend their cities and trade routes. In 85 BCE, their king Aretas III (reign 87-62 BCE) captured Damascus, which was on the major route between the Mediterranean and India and the Near East. It had been under the Seleucid Empire, so the taking of this Greek city heavily influenced Aretas to adopt many Hellenistic ways. Among these was the idea that the horse was an honorable means of transporting oneself. For hauling trade goods across the desert, the camel was still the most suitable pack animal, but the army cameleers were replaced by horse riding cavalry. Despite their cavalry and apparently with little bloodshed, in 106 CE Tragan annexed the whole Nabataean territory for Rome. After that it was referred to as Arabia Petraea.

## Ancient Inscriptions on the Topic of Horses

Written accounts of horses in Arabia are relatively late, considering the span of time through which there was trade with the outside world. Given that horses were present in Mesopotamia by 2500 BCE, it is surprising that Arabian texts referencing horses are not evidenced until after the Christian era begins. The meager texts, as well as the limited vocabulary relating to horses, suggest that they were not abundant in the peninsula. Most of the equine terms make their earliest appearance in South Arabia around the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, and most of those were written in Sabaic, the script used by the Sabaeans and the Himyarites, who conquered the Sabaean kingdom in 280 CE.

The topics under which the horse is mentioned are generally limited to military campaigns, cavalry



(Fig. 27) Petroglyph of three cavalrymen at Bi'r Hima, southern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Richard T. Bryant

officers' titles, hunting, and temple offerings. Christian Robin has studied this in detail and observed that the numbers of horses recorded in texts recounting battles fought by southern Arabian cavalries increase from the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century CE. However, according to his tallies, they only rise from single digits to a maximum of 300 horses in the attacking forces. Numbers of enemy horses killed or captured run only from 4 to 45. In comparison, Thutmose III reported taking over 2,000 mares and more than 900 chariots when he captured Megiddo around 1457 BCE. Similarly, other records for war booty and enemy losses in the Near East mention quite large numbers of horses and chariots. Based on written texts, then, there is little to suggest that the horse, particularly compared to the camel, had a significant role in warfare in Arabia in these early times.

## Stories in the Rocks: Battle and Hunting Scenes in Petroglyphs

The impression is somewhat different when studying the petroglyphs that range from roughly 500 BCE-500 CE. This chapter began with a discussion of the early petroglyphs of north-central Saudi Arabia that show wild asses or onagers, but no identifiable horses. However, in later times, horses become a common subject in rock art. Their distribution is scattered widely, and they are most frequently shown in hunting or battle scenes with riders carrying weapons.

Bi'r Hima (Map 10), a large area with thousands of images carved into rock outcrops on the southwestern edge of the Rub' al-Khali, 60 km northeast of Najran, boasts countless examples of finely executed horses and riders (Fig. 27). Most common are cavalrymen brandishing swords, shields, and extremely long lances, while sitting astride stylized horses. Some of the spears have quite large tips, like those known to have continued on into recent Bedouin times (Fig. 28). The horsemen are often clustered in opposing groups, presumably recounting actual battles. There are a few foot soldiers, as well. In one scene, the cavalry pursues riderless camels. Others show cameleers fighting horsemen.

Camels are even more plentiful than horses at Bi'r Hima, and they often appear older, with darker patina and with the horses superimposed over them (Fig. 18). Other animals depicted in this region include: domestic zebu cattle; ibexes; lions; ostriches; and a baboon.

People are shown fighting, hunting, and performing ritual dances. At Bi'r Hima and other petroglyph localities in the south, there are numerous examples of women with braided hair that are called Alia goddesses, after a known deity from historic times. These appear to have served a function in fertility rites.

The dating of all these petroglyphs is again not easy, but it is evident from associated inscriptions that many are relatively recent. Although it is possible that some of the images, particularly the camels and wild animals, date back to the first millennium BCE, the cavalrymen on horseback could be as recent as the Christian era. Long lances were used until modern times, so the weaponry shown in silhouette fashion in this rock art does not provide a useful index for the time of its creation. Written script, particularly if it can be ascertained with reasonable certainty, can narrow the range of time during which the image was likely made.



(Fig. 28) Petroglyph showing cavalryman with a lance that has an extremely large point, Bi'r Hima, southern Saudi Arabia.

Photo by Sandra L. Olsen

## The Late Pre-Islamic Period in the Southeast

The site of Mleiha (Map 10), in Sharjah, UAE, sheds light on the status of horses in a somewhat different part of the Arabian Peninsula, at a later period, the post-Iron Age.

The site is located just 20 km south of al-Dhaid and 50 km from the coast. Its location made it accessible for caravan and sea trade. While many sites are known from the preceding Iron Age (1200-300 BCE), Mleiha is nearly the only one known from the subsequent period, 150 BCE-200 CE.

This is a time when Arabia was immersed in Mediterranean influence. Attic black-glazed pottery, stamped Rhodian amphoras, and other imported wares exemplify the fact that Mleiha was a town near the sea that was active as Hellenistic trade waned, through the time when the region had a relationship with the Romans. It is also particularly interesting because it precedes Islam by only a few centuries.

A small fort with towers, cemeteries, market districts, and residences were found during excavations, but the craft workshops were perhaps the most compelling argument for social organization for labor. Areas were designated for copper and iron metallurgy, coin production, stone masonry, and bone-working. Two tiny gilt-silver spouts, shaped like the front halves of horses (Cat. #137) were probably once attached to a shallow bowl. These parts of a vessel serve as an example of the fine metalwork found at Mleiha, however, it is unknown whether the piece was manufactured locally or was an import.

The cemeteries are of great interest on a number of levels. Mortuary practices included interring people underground with their possessions, including their camels and horses. Towers were then built above their graves.

The animal burials included two horses and 12 camels, nine of which were dromedaries, while two were Bactrian/dromedary hybrids. The hybrid camels and one horse were buried with higher status than the other animals. The animals were placed beside small chambers that probably once contained human remains, but which were looted and destroyed. The animals that were not disturbed indicate that they were led into their graves and then slaughtered in place, because the camels were kneeling in a very natural position. According to the archaeologist who studied them, Hans-Peter Uerpmann, no signs of death were visible, but the most likely way they were dispatched was by cutting a major artery, probably in the neck.

Camel hybridization has been reported from Parthian times (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), the Roman level at Troy, and in Pella, Jordan, at the time of a devastating earthquake that occurred in 747 CE. The product of breeding a dromedary mare with a Bactrian male is an animal that is larger than either and heavier.

One adult stallion and six female or juvenile dromedary camels were buried in a north-south row on the west side of the human burial chambers, and another horse and the hybrid camels were placed in the center, closer to the humans. The horse skeletons were poorly preserved, but calculations from their limb bones indicate that they stood between 137-139 cm at the withers, about the size of a small Arabian horse. Their limbs were small, but not particularly gracile. One of the horses was buried with an extremely valuable bridle with gold medallions on the straps (Cat. #136). The skull of this horse could provide important information about whether the horses in southeastern Arabia at this time were indeed of the Arabian type. These remains and some from another site in Sharjah, Ed-Dur, are some of the only known examples of horses in this part of Arabia at this time.

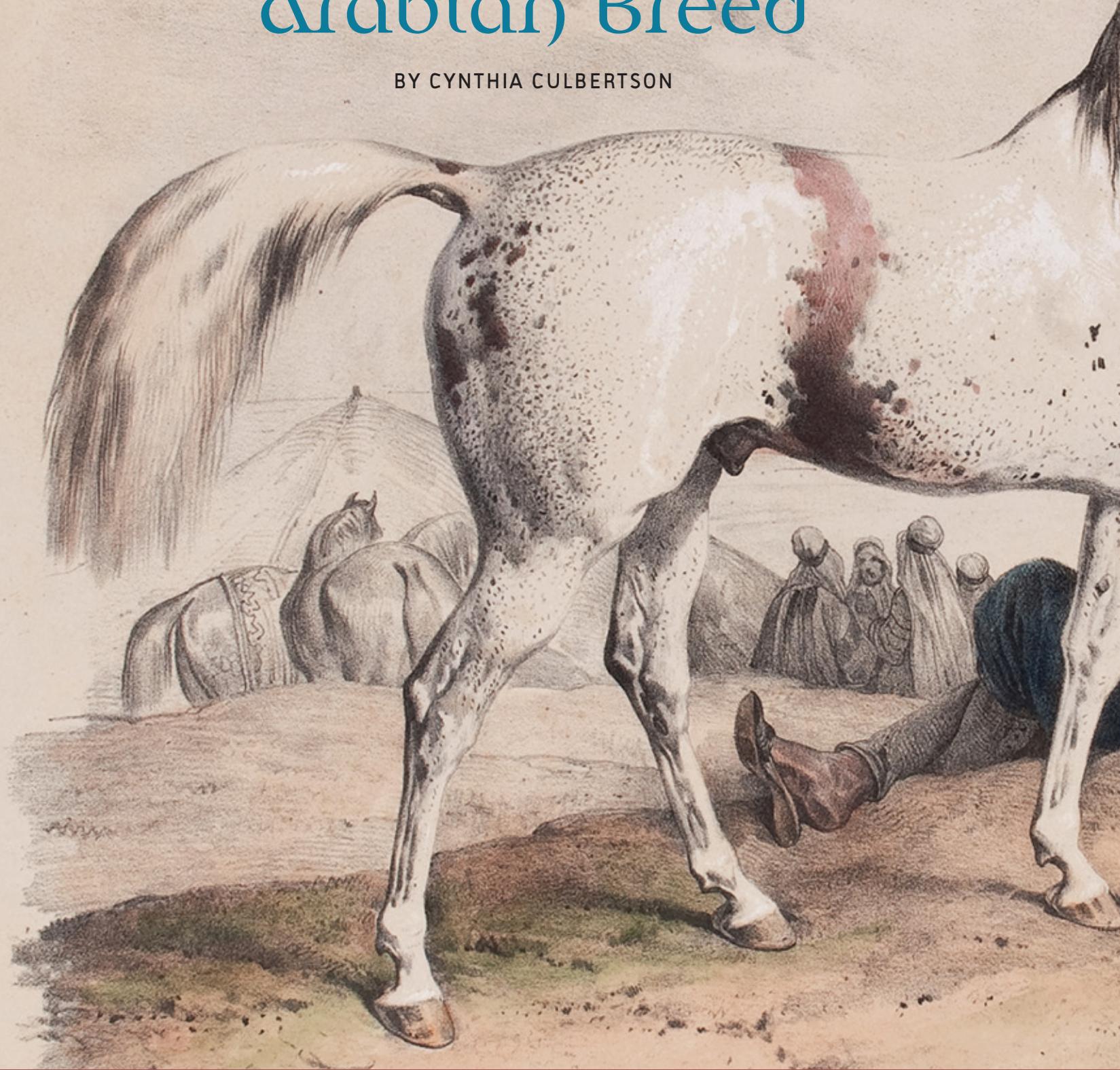
## Conclusions

The archaeological evidence for horses entering the Arabian Peninsula before about 200 BCE is very meager and after that time numbers of animals seem to be small compared to the Near East and even Egypt. It appears that before the Arabian breed was well established elsewhere and made available, it would have been very difficult to raise horses in much of Arabia. This demonstrates how critical the physical adaptations of this breed are to the success of the horse in Arabia. Because of the limited preservation of skeletal material, petroglyphs are our best source of information for the arrival and early uses of horses in this region.

PART TWO

# The Emergence and Spread of the Arabian Breed

BY CYNTHIA CULBERTSON



Hadjar  
Victor Adam  
Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
c. 1850, printed by Godard,  
published by Tessari, Paris  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme  
Catalog #363



When God wished to create the horse, he said to the South Wind, "I shall create from thee a new being, and I will make him good fortune for my followers, humiliation to my enemies, and protection for the obedient." And the wind said, "Create!" God condensed the wind and made from it a horse. Then he said to his creation, "I name thee horse and I make thee Arabian. I have bound blessings to thy forelock, and bounty reposes upon thy back, and glory will be with thee, wherever thee may be. I have privileged thee over the rest of the beasts, and I make thee master over them. Thy companions will feel compassion for thee. I make thee to fly without wings.

FROM THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY MANUSCRIPT OF  
'ALI IBN 'ABD AL-RAHMAN IBN HUDHAYL AL-ANDALUSI,  
HILYAT AL-FURSAN WA-SHI'AR AL-SHUJ'AN  
TRANSLATED BY C. CULBERTSON



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL RASWAN

CHAPTER 4

## Born of the South Wind: THE HORSES OF THE BEDOUIN

While horses were important to many different cultures in the history of humankind, the relationship between the Bedouin and their Arabian horses was exceptional in several ways. Unlike most peoples associated with the horse, the Bedouin never exploited these animals as beasts of burden but used them exclusively for riding and revered them as members of the family. They also preferred the use of mares in battle, whereas stallions were used almost exclusively in the ancient Near East, Egypt, and various other cultures that employed the horse in warfare. The Bedouin knew that mares were quieter than stallions and thus ideal for the surprise attacks that were preferred in Bedouin warfare. Finally, the Bedouin maintained a fanatical belief that they had to keep their horses pure, or *asil*, and carefully guarded against any infiltration by horses of foreign blood. General E. Daumas, in his book *The Horses of the Sahara*, wrote of the distinctive role of the horse within Arab culture:

It was essential that the horse become a sacred animal to the Arab, a providential instrument of war, created by God for a very special purpose and of a nobler essence than other animals. Not to allow the horse to be born according to natural law, but, on the contrary, to envelop his creation in a symbolism which escapes from natural law, deviating in the direction of the mysteries of legend.

## The Bedouin

To appreciate the Arabian horse it is necessary to have an understanding of the Bedouin, the nomadic Arabic-speaking peoples who developed these noble horses over centuries of breeding. The word Bedouin is derived from the Arabic word *badu*, the plural of *badawi*, meaning those who live in the desert.

Because of the limited resources in this arid environment, a nomadic lifestyle was necessary to provide grazing for the livestock that were the Bedouin's primary means of survival. During their long history in Arabia and the Near East, a hierarchy of loyalties based on closeness of kinship arose, and thus genealogy is of paramount importance in their social structure. The *sharif*, or noble tribes, are those that consider their origins of pure blood and claim descent from two main ancestors: Qahtan from the south-west part of the Arabian Peninsula and Ismail [Ishmael] from north-central Arabia. The non-*sharif*, or inferior tribes, are considered of lesser purity and include tribes with suspected impure blood or foreign origins, such as the *Salubba*, said to be the descendants of Christian crusaders.

The individual family unit of the Bedouin was known as the *bayt*, or tent, and consisted of three or four adults, often including a married couple, their **children and the siblings or parents of the couple**. This level was followed by a clan, consisting of several tents linked by patriarchal lineage or marriage, who often traveled together when pasture was plentiful. Finally, there were tribes and sub-tribes, led by a *shaykh*, or elder, whose members all claimed descent from a common ancestor. Federations were sometimes formed consisting of several branches of a tribe and there were also occasional alliances between tribes. Disputes were settled, and justice and order maintained, through this organizational framework. Individual status was based on equality, autonomy, and reputation, and no man held arbitrary power over another. While the position of *shaykh* was hereditary in nature, selection was also based on experience and leadership capabilities.

The Bedouin maintained strict codes of behavior regarding hospitality, generosity, and honor. H.R.P. Dickson, in his book *The Arab of the Desert*, relates a typical greeting of the host to his guest to illustrate the importance of hospitality in Bedouin culture: "O Guest of ours, though you have come, though you have visited us, and though you have honored our dwellings: We verily are the real guests, and you are Lord of this house." The importance of generosity was reflected in the Bedouin tradition of never selling their mares, but often giving them as gifts to others.

Because of their intimate knowledge of the desert, the Bedouin historically controlled the desert trade routes and vital wells, often using their horses and camels to escort caravans. Yet livestock was their primary source of wealth, and status was accorded by the number and type of animals each tribe possessed. The tribes that maintained camels were considered more honorable than those that had only sheep or goats. The rarest and most precious possessions, however, were horses.

## The Origin of the Horse in Arab Folklore

While the precise origins of the first equines that came into the possession of the Bedouin are as yet unknown, Bedouin folklore relates that the horse was created from the South Wind, and generations of Bedouin referred to their prized mares as "Daughters of the Wind." Tradition says their earliest horses came from Yemen in the south of Arabia and credits Ismail [Ishmael], the son of Ibrahim [Abraham], with being the first to tame and ride the horse. 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Hudhayl al-Andalusi in his fourteenth century manuscript *Hilyat al-fursan wa-shi'ar al-shuj'an* reports that Ibn 'Abbas, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad said:

The horse was wild like the rest of the untamed animals. When God gave the power and strength to Ibrahim and Ismail to elevate the columns of the house [referring to the Ka'aba in Mecca] he said, "I am giving you a treasure which I have saved for you." Then God revealed that Ismail should go out and call for it. Ismail went to Ajyad, a nearby place. He knew neither the treasure nor the call, but God inspired him with the call. There was not a horse left on the face of the land of the Arabs that did not respond to him and let him subdue them. God humbled them before him.

TRANSLATED BY C. CULBERTSON

King Solomon also figures prominently in Arab folklore as a source of Arabian horses. Legend proclaims that his father, King David, loved horses greatly, and the manuscript of Al-Andalusi describes Ibn 'Abbas as saying, "Whenever he [King David] heard a horse mentioned by age, beauty or speed, he would send after it until he had gathered one thousand horses. In that day of the world there was no more than this." Upon the death of King David, his son Solomon inherited the horses and became a passionate breeder, often requesting that his horses be paraded before him so he might recognize them by their names, markings and strains. "There was no precedence for their magnificence," Ibn 'Abbas continues, and King Solomon, he recounts, was so preoccupied by their beauty that he missed the evening prayer. In remorse it is said that Solomon begged forgiveness from God and subsequently killed the horses that had already been shown to him, saying of those that remained, "I love these one hundred more than the nine hundred which tempted me from prayer." Ibn 'Abbas concluded the tale by saying, "Horses, until this day, are descended from this remaining one hundred."

## The Arabian as War Horse

*"For the desert, the camel, for warfare, the horse, and for poverty, the ox"*

ARAB SAYING

Of the domesticated animals maintained by the Bedouin, dromedary camels were of paramount importance. They were useful as beasts of burden, for transportation, and as vital sources of meat, milk, and leather. Most important, they were uniquely suited to the homelands of the Bedouin and could survive

the harshest conditions of their desert environment. The Arabian horse, however, while also exhibiting a wide range of desert adaptations, was more difficult to maintain yet yielded a greater reward for those fortunate enough to own one. Raiding other tribes was an honorable way for the Bedouin to increase their herds and gain superiority over others. Strict rules of conduct governed these raids, called *ghazu*. Bloodshed was uncommon, and the elderly, women, and children were protected. Sir John Bagot Glubb, commander of the Arab Legion under the British, wrote of warfare in the desert, "There is a lack of resentment or hatred between the combatants in a war governed by strict rules, and a ready generosity to acknowledge the noble acts performed by the heroes of the other side." In these raids, where the element of surprise was vital, the horse was faster and more maneuverable than the camel. This meant that those Bedouin who possessed horses had a great advantage. The Arabian horse, therefore, was developed as an ideal desert warhorse and all of the exceptional qualities of the breed stem from this original purpose.



**Mounted Bedouin preparing  
for a raid or *ghazu*.**

Photograph by Carl Raswan

## Purity

An Arab saying declares "a gold jewel cannot be made except from gold" and the necessity of maintaining pure bloodlines was the primary consideration of the Bedouin when it came to breeding horses. Oral genealogy figured prominently in this nomadic society and upon meeting a stranger the first question asked after exchanging greetings was to ascertain tribal affiliation and descent. Genealogy was also of paramount concern in arranging marriage, so it is understandable that the Bedouin projected these cultural considerations onto their horses. Yet it is also likely that over centuries of breeding the Bedouin observed that the superior qualities and desert adaptations of their horses deteriorated with the infiltration of outside blood, and thus the importance of a closed gene pool was reinforced. Considerable folklore is devoted to purity and the importance of never using a horse for breeding, whatever its attributes, until the validity of its pedigree is assured. The Bedouins of the Najd in central Arabia said they would prefer their mares be covered by an ugly well-bred stallion than a beautiful stallion of less pure lineage. They asserted that the offspring of the former will continually improve, while the descendants of the latter cannot help but get worse and worse. The Bedouin also believed in telegony, or the concept that if a mare was bred to an impure stallion, all of her future offspring would be contaminated.

The Bedouin who was fortunate to own a precious mare could recite her pedigree for generations, and the importance of maintaining knowledge of this lineage overcame even enmity between tribes. In his 1894 book *The Arabian Horse, His Country and People*, Major-General W. Tweedie quotes a story from Sir Henry Layard's visit to an encampment of the Tai tribe after they had just been defeated by the Shammar and lost forty of their best mares:

While their Shekh [sic] was deep in gloomy consultation with his warriors over their misfortune, an emissary from the victorious Sham-mar [sic], wrapped in this ragged cloak, sat listlessly among them, waiting to be informed of the pedigrees of the mares which he and his people had taken from them. Such an act might appear to those ignorant of the customs of the Arabs one of insult and defiance. But he was on a common errand: and although there was blood between the tribes, his person was as sacred as that of an ambassador in any civilized community. Whenever a horse falls into the hands of an Arab, his first thought is how to ascertain its descent.

The oldest literature on Arabian horses in Arabic relates their genealogy by name, often including stories of their courage or other attributes as well as the status and exploits of their owners and, at some point within the past few hundred years, certain influential mares founded families that became known as "strains" within the breed. Legend declares that the original strain was the *Kuhaylan*, deriving from the word *kuhl*, the black substance used as eyeliner in the Arab world and presumably a reference to the large dark eyes and black skin of the mare which founded this family. Various strain names, such as *'Abayyan*, *Dahman*, *Hadban*, *Saqlawi*, *Hamdani*, and many others became attached to the descendants of a particular mare. These strains were inherited only through the female line, so no matter how many different strains were represented in a pedigree, the horse was known only by the strain of its dam.

The story of a Bedouin and his mare being pursued by an enemy provides an excellent illustration of the manner by which strain names came into existence. Although his mare was fleet, the foes of the Bedouin were gaining ground, so he began throwing away his possessions to lighten her load. Finally all that remained was his cloak, or *'aba*, and so he also tossed this behind him. As he galloped into camp after a successful escape, he turned around only to find that his cloak was caught on the high-carried tail of his mare. Thus, the descendants of this notable mare became known as *'Abayyan* and were presumably known for this valuable breed characteristic. Various sub-strains evolved over time as certain families within a strain became worthy of their own designation. This sub-strain name was attached behind that of the main strain, thus a horse of the *Dahman* strain and *Shahwan* sub-strain would be known as a *Dahman Shahwan*. While the origins of these strains were long a part of Bedouin oral tradition, the famed *Abbas Pasha Manuscript*, gathered by the emissaries of the Viceroy of Egypt from whom it takes its name, provides a fascinating written record of the histories of these strains. An example is the following excerpt from the history of the *Saqlawi Jidran*:

By Allah, O Ali Bey [the emissary of Abbas Pasha] you have made us swear by our honor and good fortune; therefore, we will tell you the true history that we have heard from our grandfathers' grandfathers and from our elders and from our first whitehaired men.

Al Saqlawia al Jedraniya belonged to Ibn al Zarba of al Muwalli and from Ibn Zarba she passed to Ibn Dalmaz from al Sardiyah. And she was a shaqra [grey] mare. From Ibn Dalmaz she passed to Abu al Hamayel and from Abu Hamayel she passed to Ibn Bakr of Bani Sakhr. And when Ibn Bakr traveled to al Jauf to gather dates, he took the shaqra with him and he went to al Jauf. And he gathered dates and then returned to his people.

Suleyman ibn Jedran, one of [the] grandfathers, was a *gazayi* [a raider] and on the day of al Arban [the Arabs] at Nejd, he arrived suddenly at al Jauf and asked about Ibn Bakr. The Ra'i of al Jauf told him that Ibn Bakr had gathered dates and had gone back to his family that same morning. Suleyman ibn Jedran was very angry and attacked Ibn Bakr by night. And Suleyman al Jedran took the shaqra mare, who

had been passed on from al Muwalli and she went to his place. She was called since that time Saqlawiya Jedraniya. And she remained with him for eight years and was very swift.

And Suleyman swore an oath: 'alaya al talaq, I might divorce, but I will never mate my mare to a horse that cannot defeat her in racing.'

FROM THE ABBAS PASHA MANUSCRIPT AND HORSES AND HORSEMEN OF  
ARABIA AND EGYPT DURING THE TIME OF ABBAS PASHA  
BY GÜLSÜN SHERIF AND JUDITH FORBIS

The Bedouins often used a written oath, called a *hujjah*, to testify to the origin and purity of their horses. These *hujjahs* were occasionally placed in a pouch around the neck of well-known mares so that, even if stolen, knowledge of their purity was assured.

## Character and Training

The character of the Arabian horse, particularly such attributes as loyalty, courage and intelligence, owes much to being reared in proximity to humans for centuries. In *Horses of the Sahara*, General E. Daumas wrote:

Could it not be that the Arabs, because of their intimate association with the horse, have known how to develop in him faculties unknown to us, while we do not grant any more to the horse than the possession of the instinct of memory? To the Arabs the horse is a family friend; where on the contrary, to us he is only a luxury or tool for work.

Horses in a Bedouin camp were accustomed to humans from the moment of their birth. This technique is known as imprinting, referring to a period of rapid learning immediately after birth that establishes a long-term behavioral attachment. While the process of imprinting foals is widely acknowledged today, the Bedouin used this technique hundreds of years before its scientific validation. Johann Burckhardt, a Swiss explorer who traveled among the Bedouin in the early 1800s observed, "The Bedouins never let the foal drop to the ground at the moment of its birth, but they receive it in their arms and handle it with the utmost care for several hours; they wash it and stretch its delicate limbs and caress it all over like a child." General Daumas also reports that the Bedouin carried a newborn foal in their arms and walked about with it in the camp in the midst of all the usual clamor and noise. This early form of imprinting ensured that foals related to humans as fellow horses and not as predators. Bedouin children engaged in play with young horses, and it was not unusual for the mares and foals to enter the tent as if they were simply other members of the household.

Laurent d'Arvieux, a French traveler to the desert in the seventeenth century, described the treatment of a mare in a Bedouin encampment:

They never tied her up when she was not bridled or saddled. She went into all the tents with a little colt of hers and so visited everybody that used to kiss her, make much of her, and give her anything. She would often go over a heap of children that were lying at the bottom of the tents and would be a long time looking where to step, as she came in or out, not to hurt them. Those mares are so used to living in that familiarity that they bear any kind of toying with. The Arabs never beat them, they make much of them, talk and reason with them, and take the greatest imaginable care of them.

Lady Anne Blunt wrote of the Bedouin, "Their merit as horse-breakers is unwearied patience. Loss of temper with a beast is not in their nature, and I have never seen them strike or ill-use their mares in any way."

The Bedouin rarely used bits and sometimes eschewed saddles as well. They generally rode their



Arabian horses in the desert were raised in close proximity to their owners and were often treated as if they were members of the Bedouin family.

Photograph by Carl Raswan

mounts with a simple halter and nose chain, using the balance of their weight and legs to guide their horses. In warfare it was not unusual for a horse to stand over a fallen rider and defend him. There are also numerous accounts of horses aiding a rider by attacking the enemy. Lines from the poem of Shahwan, translated by Gülsün Sherif and Judith Forbis, attest to the bravery of a mare in battle:

*During the attacks  
she strikes with her forefeet and hind feet,  
and the rider strikes with his sword and arrows.*

*And the higher the pitch of battle,  
the more aroused the mare becomes...*

*She defends her rider  
even putting herself in peril,  
and she does not give the enemy a chance  
to wound her rider.*

The Bedouins had an innate understanding that, while a horse trained by an aggressor may obey commands through fear and intimidation, only a horse that relates to humans as members of its herd will act in defense of its rider. This concept is illustrated by a pre-Islamic poet who spoke of his mare in battle:

I charged them with Wajrah [the name of his mare]...When she had gone clean through them, she turned and dashed against them again, as though her foal and my first-born son were in the midst of them...

TRANSLATED BY SIR CHARLES LYALL

The character of a horse was a primary consideration in making breeding selections, and there are numerous Bedouin sayings to indicate that horses should be judged more by their character and moral attributes than by their appearance. In *Horses of the Sahara*, General Daumas relates a description of the ideal character of the Arabian horse:

A horse is truly noble when, in addition to having beautiful conformation, he joins courage to fieriness and glows with pride in the midst of gunpowder and dangers. Such a horse will love his master, he will keep his rider safe from dangers inherent in the chase and war, he will share his feelings of sorrow or pleasure of his rider; he will help him in combat by fighting as well. He will, always, and in everything, make common cause with his master.

## Women and the Arabian Horses of the Bedouin

The women and children of the tribe were given considerable responsibility for the care and early training of horses. The book *Women in the Aiyam al-'Arab, a Study of Female Life during Warfare in Pre-Islamic Arabia*, written by Ilse Lichtenstadter in 1935, cites a verse that says, "With regard to [the care of] their horses the Arabs trusted none save their sons and their women." Another reference in this book speaks of a Bedouin who called to his daughter to saddle his mare after a war cry was sounded, indicating the women of the tribe were well able to ready a horse for battle. Women were also known to have ridden horses themselves and even participated in wars. The poem of Mani, about a mare of the *Hadbah* strain, attests to the bravery of the women who fought against the invasion of Arabia by the Ottoman Turks in the nineteenth century:

*She loos'd the reins of the mare so she could run faster,  
But the number of Turks were still pursuing,  
And the mares who are ridden by women  
are not afraid when they see a raid coming upon them  
and this shows the courage of the women who are riding  
And when the Arabs knew they were going to be attacked,  
they would beat the drums as a warning.  
And the eyes of the mares sparkled,  
because they were excited about the coming battle.*

FROM THE ABBAS PASHA MANUSCRIPT AND  
HORSES AND HORSEMEN OF ARABIA AND EGYPT DURING THE TIME OF ABBAS PASHA  
BY GÜLSÜN SHERIF AND JUDITH FORBIS

General Daumas also wrote extensively on the role of women in the care of horses:

The Arabs seek in the horse a devoted friend. Among them (if I dare to express myself thus) the woman plays a big role; that of preparing by her sweetness, her vigilance, and her constant care, the solidarity which should be established between man and the animal. In the morning it is the woman who feeds [the mare] and looks after her. If the weather permits she washes the mane and tail. If the spot the horse occupies is on broken ground, uneven, or covered with rocks, she puts her in a more suitable place for rest and to preserve her legs. It is still morning when the Arabic woman goes to the pasture to gather for the animal she loves an ample ration of plants ... In this respect the Arabic woman is so intransigent that she will not even excuse her husband if he does not care for his horse. The horse is her honor, her fortune; she is proud, jealous, and believes herself to be responsible for everything which concerns the horse.

## Conformation

The Arabian horse has distinctive conformation that stems both from its desert environment and from human selection through breeding for the qualities deemed most important for its purpose. There is a considerable amount of Bedouin folklore regarding ideal conformation. Lady Anne Blunt observed, "The head and tail are the two points especially regarded by Arabs in judging of a horse, as in them they think they can discover the surest signs of his breeding. The tails of the Nejd horses are as peculiar as their heads, and are as essential to their beauty. However other points might differ, every horse at Hail had its tail set on in the same fashion, in repose something like a rocking horse ... In motion the tail was held high in the air, and looked as if it could not under any circumstances be carried low." The Bedouin were amazed when Europeans seeking horses in the desert would first look at the legs and feet of a horse, for it was Bedouin belief that the character and nobility of a horse were most evident in its head and expression.

Bedouin women were responsible for much of the care of the Arabian horses of the tribe.

Photograph by Carl Raswan



Among the most common Bedouin sayings was that a purebred horse has:

Three things long, three things short, three things broad and three things pure.

The three long things are: neck, forearms, and underline

The three short things are: dock of the tail, back, and ears

The three broad things are: the forehead, the chest, and the croup

The three pure (solid) things are: the skin, the eyes, and the hooves.

Arabian horses have always been small in stature, generally reaching a height of between 14 and 15 hands. On this point HH Prince Muhammad Ali of Egypt, in his book *Breeding Purebred Arabian Horses*, stated, "The Arabs do not consider that height has any relative value, it is proportion that makes the value, and we shall see that they preferred the smaller horse."

Color was also regarded as an important indication of the merit of a horse. Chestnuts were highly favored and considered to be the fastest of all horses. A popular saying claimed, "If someone assures you that a horse flew, ask what color he was, and if you are told chestnut, then believe it." Bays were considered to be the hardiest, and a saying regarding this color was, "If someone tells you that a horse leapt to the bottom of an abyss without injuring himself, ask what color he was, and if you are told bay, then believe it." The white horse was said to be the mount of kings, "because he brings good fortune and luck, and with him you are able to obtain what is necessary." The Bedouins strongly disliked certain colors, such as dun or piebald, as reflected in a saying about the latter, which advised, "Fly from him like the plague, for he is the brother of the cow." The reason for these strong prejudices was likely twofold: the common colors of Arabian horses are bay, black, chestnut, and grey [white in maturity], accompanied by underlying black skin; therefore, other colors might indicate the presence of foreign blood; and an abundance of pink skin, such as would be found on the piebald horse, would not withstand the intense sunlight of the desert. Markings and hair whorls were also the source of much speculation – some considered good omens, while others indicated bad luck and misfortune for the owner.

## The Horse in Pre-Islamic Poetry

Poetry was the finest artistic achievement of the Bedouin, and in pre-Islamic times poems were committed to memory and transmitted orally for generations. The poet, or *sha'ir*, held a position of high regard, functioning as both historian and genealogist for the tribe, often boasting of its exploits and ridiculing rival tribes. On many occasions poets from different tribes would meet in mock verbal battles with the victors gaining much prestige. The most well-known type of poem in pre-Islamic times was the ode known as a *qasida* where a single meter is sustained and every line rhymed. These elaborate poems were often written in praise of a nobleman or warrior and followed a consistent theme based on a desert journey. The opening typically begins with the poet halting at an abandoned site in nostalgic reflection of those who had once lived there. The ode progresses with a stirring lament for a lost love followed by the poet extolling the virtues of his camel or horse. These descriptions of horses reveal much about the Arabian breed in pre-Islamic times and illustrate the high esteem in which purebred horses were held.



Contemporary Syrian folkart depicting the romantic hero Antar, a pre-Islamic poet-warrior.

Collection of Judith Forbis  
Photograph by Richard T. Bryant  
Catalog #174

The most famous of these *qasidas* are the seven odes known as the *Mu'allaqat*, or suspended poems, because they were purportedly written on gold linen and hung in Mecca. The sixth century poem of Imru al-Qais, the son of a Yemeni king, is perhaps the most renowned, and contains a beautiful description of his bay stallion:

*Early in the morning, while the birds were still nesting, I mounted my steed.  
Well-bred was he, long-bodied, outstripping the wild beasts in speed,*

*Swift to attack, to flee, to turn, yet firm as a rock swept down by the torrent,  
Bay-colored, and so smooth the saddle slips from him, as the rain from a smooth stone,*

*Thin but full of life, fire boils within him like the snorting of a boiling kettle;  
He continues at full gallop when other horses are dragging their feet in the dust for weariness.*

*A boy would be blown from his back, and even the strong rider loses his garments.  
Fast is my steed as a top when a child has spun it well.*

TRANSLATED BY A.J. ARBERRY

Another ode from the *Mu'allaqat* is that of Labid, a desert warrior and poet whose admiration of his mare is palpable:

*And I came down riding, my mare's neck held loftily  
as a palm fruit-laden: woe to the gatherer!*

*Swift was she, an ostrich, galloped she how wrathfully,  
from her side the sweat streamed, lightening the ribs of her;*

*Strained on her saddle; dripped with wet the neck of her;  
the white foam-flakes wreathing, edging the girth of her;*

*Thrusteth her neck forward, shaketh her reins galloping;  
flieth as the doves fly bound for the water-springs.*

TRANSLATED BY WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT AFTER LADY ANNE BLUNT

One of the most compelling stories of this period is that of Antara bin Shaddad, who came to represent the best of Bedouin heroism, chivalry, and valor. His father was a respected member of the *Banu Abs* tribe and his mother an Ethiopian slave. Excelling as both poet and warrior, many of Antara's remarkable feats were accomplished out of his love for his cousin Abla, whom he sought to marry despite his status as a slave. His bravery in battle led to his acknowledgement by his father, who eventually granted him his freedom. The story of Antara has gained fame throughout the world and lives on today in the annals of romantic literature. His *qasida* passionately describes a battle in which his brave stallion was grievously wounded:

*When I beheld the people advancing in solid mass  
urging each other on, I wheeled on them blamelessly;  
"Antara!" They were calling, and the lances were like  
well-ropes sinking into the breast of my black steed.  
Continuously I charged them with his white-blazed face  
and his breast, until his body was caparisoned with blood,  
and he twisted round to the spears' impact upon his breast  
and complained to me, sobbing and whimpering;  
had he known the art of conversation, he would have protested  
and had he been acquainted with speech, he would have spoken to me.*

TRANSLATED BY A.J. ARBERRY

Volume two of the *Mufaddaliyat: An Anthology of Ancient Arabian Odes*, edited and translated by Sir Charles James Lyall, is a collection of poetry from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras, much of which features the horse. The poem of Al Marrar is particularly notable because his description of his young stallion combines all of the elements important to the Bedouin in breeding the Arabian horse: speed, agility, and stamina; color and markings; character; and purity of pedigree.

*Mounted on a steed that takes long strides in his gallop, with flowing mane, fleet, of the strain of al-Munkadir:*

*With the blaze in his forehead spreading downwards towards the nose, having stockings of white half-way up his leg, long in the front of the hoof, thick and strong in the pastern;*

*Full grown as to his teeth on one side when his mouth is looked into, and on the other side with his fourth-year tooth not shed:*

*Of a bright, yellowish bay when he bristles up his hair, and a dark bay when he does not bristle up.*

*We send out the firewood-gatherers if we go forth in the morning with him to hunt the ostrich or the wild ass.*

*A horse that inclines much to one side when thou checkest him but when he is let go, he is swift as a bird in flight.*

*He rides down the pair of wild asses in their dust: he is quick and nimble when he makes his charge, unswerving:*

*Then, if he is pulled up at the furthest limit of their run, [through impatience] he paws the ground with his fore-feet like the action of one who digs for water.*

*He has full command of himself as soon as his first shortness of breath has passed: we stroke him down, but he will not be still, so eager is his heart.*

*Already we have made trial of him in all circumstances, both when he was full-fed and fat, and when he was lean and spare after training;*

*When on a day we drive him to full speed when he is fat, his running is like the kindling of firewood blazing up;*

*And when we have taken down his fat and sweated him under blankets, then he is full of running after running, an unwearied galloper:*

*He joins gallop to gallop even as the long trailing rain-cloud sends battering down shower after shower.*

*His pace when he ambles is like the running of the fox: when he is put to a gallop, he is like a fleet antelope.*

*He rears up straight when thou startlest him: he is hardly to be bridled unless thou use force.*

*As often as we go forth in the morning to hunt, it seems as though I were mounted on a falcon swooping on its prey,*

*Or a light arrow sped from a bow of shiryanah-wood, which the archer has feathered with thin slips of the inner wing-feathers.*

*Full of spirit is he – then, when thou has quieted him down, tractable, gentle of temper, easy to control.*

*Among the sires and dams from whom he counts his race were the strain of Al-A'waj, great gallopers and jumpers.*

TRANSLATED BY SIR CHARLES JAMES LYALL



CHAPTER 5

# Realms of Splendor: ISLAMIC DYNASTIES AND THEIR STEEDS

*“Take upon you the mares!*

*Their backs are a sanctuary, and their wombs are a treasure.”*

HADITH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

## The Horse in the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths [Sayings] of the Prophet Muhammad

The rise of Islam marked a pivotal point in the history of the Arabian horse. By the time of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca in 570 CE, the Arabian almost certainly exhibited the homogenous characteristics that distinguished it as a true breed. It is also likely that the Prophet encountered horses early in his life because tradition dictated that youngsters at that time be sent from the city to live with a Bedouin family, and the young Muhammad was no exception. Life in the desert was thought to be healthier for children than that in the city, and the Bedouin lifestyle, though harsh, was considered an exemplary one. The Prophet's early years were challenging, however, because his father died before he was born, and he was fully orphaned by the age of six when his mother also passed away. He was eventually placed under the guardianship of his uncle, Abu Talib, a leader of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe, and as a teenager is known to have accompanied his uncle on trading journeys to Syria. These journeys may have provided Muhammad with further opportunities to interact with horses, although whether his travel was made by camel or horseback is unknown.

As an adult, the Prophet Muhammad became a successful merchant and was known as an extremely trustworthy man who was often sought by others as a fair and thoughtful arbitrator. He married the widow Khadijah in 595 CE and at some point in his adult life began traveling to a cave on Mount Hira near Mecca for periods of meditation. It was here that he received the first of many revelations from God that became the Holy Qur'an. There are stories that Muhammad had occasional moments of confusion and doubt, but the angel Gabriel appeared to remind him, "Thou art the Messenger of God." W. Montgomery Watt, in his book *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, wrote of the Prophet:

He never altogether lost the conviction that he had been called by God and given a special work to do in his day and generation. This conviction sustained him in the face of opposition, mockery, calumny and persecution; and when success came to him, it did not turn his head, but only deepened his belief that God who had called him was also working for him in historical events.

Muhammad's realization that he was a prophet was readily accepted by his wife and several of his relatives, and he began preaching to his fellow Meccans around 613 CE, soon gaining a considerable following. When he delivered the verses of the Holy Qur'an that condemned the worship of idols, however, he became a threat to those Meccan merchants whose livelihood depended on the pilgrims who regularly traveled to the Ka'aba to worship the hundreds of patron deities there. These powerful merchants, many from the Prophet's own Quraysh tribe, offered him admission to their inner circle, but the Prophet refused. Upon the death of his uncle, Abu Talib, the clan leadership passed to Abu Lahab, who, as an enemy of the Prophet, withdrew the clan's protection of him, putting him in grave peril.

The Prophet sought to escape the dangers in Mecca and was eventually invited to Yathrib, now known as Medina. His journey to this city with his followers in 622 CE is known as the *Hijra* and marks the first year of the Islamic calendar. The Prophet established an alliance with the tribes of Medina, including drafting a constitution that specified the rights and duties of residents. New converts to Islam joined the emigrants from Mecca and the first Islamic state was established. Because the Meccans continued to feel threatened by the new religion, a series of altercations took place and



A depiction of the early Muslims destroying the pagan statues in the Ka'aba in Mecca.

From the 11th century L'Histoire Merveilleuse en Vers de Mahomet

(Previous page)  
Detail from 14th - 15th century Timurid brass bowl.  
Furusiyia Art Foundation Catalog #216

armed conflict ensued. Finally, in 630 CE, the Prophet Muhammad returned to Mecca with a force said to consist of more than ten thousand men. The Muslims took control of the city, destroying the pagan statues of the Ka'aba, and most of the Meccans converted to Islam along with many of the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula.

While there were relatively few horses used by the Muslims in their earliest battles, the use of the Arabian horse in *jihad*, or Holy War, is inextricably linked with the religion of Islam. It is said that the Prophet Muhammad awarded a double share of booty to those who used horses for *jihad* with two shares for the horse and one for the rider. Certainly the Prophet was known to be especially fond of horses, and his respect for them became an example to all Muslims. He owned at least six or seven during his lifetime, and according to Islamic tradition, their names were *al-Sakb*, *al-Murjatiz*, *Lizaz*, *al-Tharib*, *al-Luhayf*, *al-Ward* and *al-Yasub*. In the twelfth-century book *Merit of the Horse in Islam*, written by Al-Hafez Abdul Mu'men al-Dumyati, a chapter devoted to the horses of the Prophet tells the story of his first horse:

Ibn Sa'd related through Al-Waqidi, on the authority of Abi Hathma, that the first horse owned by the Prophet was the one he bought in Medina from a man of Bani Fazara, and paid for it 10 Awaqi. The Bedouin man from Fazara used to call his horse Al-Dariss, but the Prophet changed the name into Al-Sakb meaning [a fast horse like] running water. Al-Sakb was one of the two horses Muslims used in their early Jihad.

TRANSLATED BY DR. MUNZER A. ABISI AND ASMAHAN SALLAH

This same book offers various descriptions of Al-Sakb, explaining that, while some said he was a bay, others referred to him as black. His markings are described as a blaze on his face, with white stockings on his left foreleg and both hind legs. The Prophet was also known to enjoy horse racing, and al-Dumyati relates on the authority of Wa'ilah ibn al-Aqsa' that "the Prophet once arranged for a horse race in Makka [sic] at Al-Mouhasseb among a variety of Muslims' horses." According to this tradition, the Prophet's horse won the race after which he compared it to the sea in terms of speed.

One of the most famous *hadiths* of the Prophet refers to him stroking or braiding the forelock of a horse while stating, "Blessings are bound to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Judgment." Al-Andalusi relates that 'Aday ibn Fadl asked the Prophet, "What possessions are good?" and the Prophet replied, "A row of pollinated date trees or a mare which produces many foals." In the same book he mentions that 'Amru ibn Ali Ans related that Sa'ad said, "Oh Prophet! I do have mares," and the Prophet replied, "Then keep them and breed them to stallions, and keep the mares that result from this, and you will rise to the highest levels of heaven." This source quotes another *hadith* of the Prophet according to Abi Hurayra:

There are three kinds of horses: those which are rewarding to a man, those which are a shield for a man, and those which are an encumbrance upon a man. As for those which are a reward, a man should use them according to God's wishes. If a man crosses a river, and he waters them from it, for each drop that goes into the horse's stomach, he will get a reward. If he comes across a pasture, and he grazes the horses on it, for each bite that goes into the horse's stomach, he will get a reward. Until he [the Prophet] mentions that there is even a reward in their droppings and urine. As for those which are a shield, a man uses them for their beauty and nobility, and would not forget the rights of God upon their backs and necks. As for those which are a burden to a man, he uses them in a wild and reckless way, and is a hypocrite to the people. He would not fulfill the rights of their backs and stomachs.

The Holy Qur'an makes several references to Arabian horses. Surah 3:14 describes them as possessions especially beloved of man: "Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals." The horses of King Solomon are also referenced in Surah 3:31: "Behold, there were brought before him, at eventide coursers of the highest breeding, and swift of foot."

The use of the horse against the enemies of Islam is the subject of Surah 8:60:

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.

TRANSLATED BY YUSUF ALI

The most stirring description of the horse in the Holy Qur'an, however, is that of Surah 100:1-6, which describes the valiant Arabian war horse:

By the steeds that run  
With panting breath  
And strike sparks of fire,  
And push home the charge in the morning,  
And raise the dust in clouds the while,  
And penetrate forthwith into the midst of the foe  
Truly man is, to his Lord, ungrateful.

TRANSLATED BY YUSUF ALI

## The Spread of Islam

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, the Muslims continued to consolidate their power within the Arabian Peninsula and, united by their faith in God, rapidly expanded northward. The early success of the Muslims was determined by several factors, including the turmoil created by long years of war between the Byzantine and Persian empires, leaving these regions open to conquest. During the reign of the first four caliphs, the Islamic state expanded to most of the Near East and into Africa and the following centuries witnessed the spread of Islam to nearly two-thirds of the known world. This event was unparalleled in human history. Aggression and forceful conversions were rare under the Arabs, and the new religion effectively embraced peoples of widely differing cultures and social status. Although implementation of a personal tax on non-Muslims led many to convert, Jews and Christians were acknowledged as "people of the book" since they worshipped the same God as the Arabs and, therefore, lived peacefully, for the most part, with the conquerors. Arab Muslims were often accorded privileged status, yet non-Muslims actively participated in government and commerce and achieved considerable economic and social success. The countries that came under the banner of Islam also enjoyed governance with efficiency and flexibility, another encouragement for their citizens to embrace the new religion.

While Western Europe was experiencing the Dark Ages, astonishing advances in science, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy accompanied the Islamic expansion. Muslims preserved and translated the greatest works of the Greeks, including those of Aristotle. They developed algebra and trigonometry, studied astronomy, improved the astrolabe and devised accurate tables for calculating the positions of the stars and planets. Physicians described the workings of the human body, defining diseases and writing treatises on medical treatment. Rulers established centers of learning, producing philosophical, geographic, scientific and literary works that endured for centuries. These achievements later influenced many other civilizations and provided the impetus for the Renaissance in Europe. The influx of Arabian horses and Arab horsemen also had a profound impact throughout the Islamic world and beyond, both on the breeding of horses and on the principles of horsemanship.

The Islamic conquest was largely accomplished on the backs of Arabian horses, and as the Muslims spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula, so too did respect and admiration for these beautiful and hardy creatures. While the adversaries of the Muslims considered their own mounts merely beasts of burden, the Muslims fervently believed their horses were rational beings whose hearts and minds



Representation of the constellation Pegasus, known as Al Faras al-Thani (alphares), from an Islamic astronomy manuscript.

Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Oman  
Photograph by Richard T. Bryant

reflected those of their riders. This philosophy, along with the example of the Prophet Muhammad's love for horses, ensured that the Arabian breed was accorded high status throughout the Islamic world. Although the Arabians were often crossed with local horses in conquered regions such as North Africa, Spain, Persia, and India, a clear distinction was made between these horses and Arabians, and the Arabic language has several words to differentiate the crossbreds from the *asil*, or purebred horses.

The first campaign in Islamic history consisting of cavalry as the primary force was the conquest of Egypt beginning in 639 CE. While relatively few horses accompanied the Muslims as they moved northward from Arabia, it is likely they acquired additional horses in Syria and Iraq from the Arab tribes in those regions. Al-Andalusi relates that Abdul Rahman ibn Ziyad began his historical account of the Muslims' Egyptian campaign by stating that they found good pasture for their horses, suggesting the importance of the Arabians to Muslim expansion. From this point forward horses played a vital role in the Islamic conquest, as light cavalry became the most powerful section of the Muslims' military force. In battle, the agility of the Arabian horse was an advantage in swiftly engaging the enemy and then turning back to attack once more from the flank or rear. In addition, the horses were often trained to avoid an enemy lance by swerving, even without the rider giving a command. Although the Muslim forces by this time were a highly organized army, the Arabian had already been bred for centuries to be an agile war horse. Their sensitivity to their riders, as well as their stamina and ability to withstand harsh conditions, made them the perfect mount for the fast and highly maneuverable cavalry preferred by the Muslims.



**There were many manuscripts produced in the Islamic world on the subject of Furusiyya, or the arts of the Muslim knight. These manuscripts elaborated the principles of horsemanship, hippology, techniques of war, and chivalry.**

Four Horseman, 1371 CE  
British Library  
HIP / Art Resource, NY

## Islamic Empires

The Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 CE), established in Damascus by Mu'awiyah, became the seventh largest contiguous empire in history, extending throughout the Near East into Sindh and Punjab along the Indus river and across North Africa to Spain. The Umayyads, like the Prophet Muhammad, were originally from Arabia, descended from the Meccan elite who had originally opposed the Prophet, but eventually converted to Islam in 630 CE. During this era the Arabian horse was an important asset for the military and was introduced for the first time in many of the regions conquered by the Umayyads.

Conflict between two groups of Muslims, the Sunnis and the Shi'a eventually led to the downfall of the Umayyads, and during the next century the Baghdad-based Abbasid caliphate came into power. This time period is often called "the Golden Age of Islam" because of the intellectual climate that led to numerous innovations in science, agriculture, and other technology such as bookbinding and papermaking. Trade also flourished under the Abbasids, extending to places as far away as China and East India. Arabian horses were an important commodity, and the most famous caliph of this era, Harun al-Rashid, was known to breed and race horses, expressing great delight when his horses were victorious.

Many important treatises on the horse were written during this era, several of which have survived. Early philological works include Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn al-Kalbi's *Nasab al-khayl* [Strains of Horses], and Abu 'Ubayda Ma'Mar bin al-Muthanna's *Kitab al-Khayl* [Book of Horses], and the work of his rival, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Quraib al-Asmai, who wrote a book of the same title. These works primarily relate the history of the Arabian horse through poetry and stories as well as recounting the *hadiths* of the Prophet

Muhammad and the horse in the Holy Qur'an. The early Abbasid period also produced the first surviving work that elaborates the concept of *furusiyah*, or the arts of the Muslim knight encompassing horsemanship, hippology, military techniques and chivalry. While these furusiyya manuscripts reached their apogee in the later Mamluk period, an important work from the second half of the ninth century is *Kitab al-furusiyah wa'l-baytara*, written by Ibn Akhi Hizam.

This manuscript contains detailed instructions on the care and training of horses and encompasses a wide range of topics from veterinary medicine to riding techniques. In all instances, Ibn Akhi Hizam's primary focus was that the trainer act gently and with great care towards his mount. He also specifies different methods and equipment to be used for purebred Arabians because of their greater sensitivity than mixed breeds of horses. Excerpts translated by Beate Siewert-Mayer in her article "Riding in the Early Abbasid Period" published in *Furusiyya*, vol. 1, includes several examples. When discussing bits, for instance, Ibn Akhi Hizam states, "Pure-bred Arabian horses need lighter bits than the shahari [a special

type of mixed breed] and others.” Balance was the keystone of his approach to riding and training, and he is quick to blame almost all vices of horses on a bad education and not their intrinsic nature. This point is evidenced by his comments on the use of the whip on a frightened horse:

I have seen some people use the whip unceasingly when horses took fright, but in my opinion this is a mistake. You can grasp this by comparing it to other situations. When the horse takes fright, treat it gently and stop to let it look at what frightened it. While looking, it will breathe heavily, so that its heart will nearly collapse, and this behavior is an indication to you of its fright. After having looked at [the thing], it will feel safe and relax; understand this, and judge accordingly! After you have stopped and made the horse understand [the cause of its fright], you should move the horse toward it; now it will proceed!

TRANSLATED BY BEATE SIEWERT-MAYER

Poetry from the Abbasid period continues the tradition of celebrating the Arabian horse. The poet Al-Mutannabi, who spent time in the desert with the Bedouin and was a renowned court poet, once declared that among the best places to be found on earth was the back of a galloping horse. His most famous line also makes reference to the horse: “I am known to night and horses and the desert, to sword and lance, to parchment and pen.” Al-Mutannabi expounds on the joys of riding an exceptional steed in his panegyric to Kafur, a ruler of Egypt:

*And many a day like the night of lovers I have ridden through, watching the sun when it should set,  
my eyes fixed on the ears of a bright-blazed horse which was as if a star of the night remained between its eyes...  
Fine steeds, like true friends are few, even if in the eye of the inexperienced they are many.*

TRANSLATED BY A. J. ARBERRY

Arabian horses were an important symbol of wealth and generosity throughout the Islamic world and presenting horses as gifts of honor was common. One of the more lavish examples occurred during the reign of the Fatimids, a Shi'a Islamic dynasty that ruled North Africa and the Levant from 909-1171 CE, establishing Cairo as their capital. When Caliph al-Muizz Abu-Tamim Mu'd entered Egypt in 973 CE, he is said to have given a dramatic speech at Alexandria, proclaiming that he had come to Egypt not to increase his own wealth or importance but to maintain the true faith. As a symbol of his generosity he then presented extravagantly adorned horses to each of the Egyptian dignitaries who were present. When the caliph later entered Cairo for his first public appearance, his gesture was reciprocated by the nobles there. In *History of Egypt*, published in London in 1914, Stanley Lane Poole wrote that the gifts for the caliph included “500 horses with saddles and bridles encrusted with gold, amber and precious stones.”

The Arabian horse continued to be an important military asset during the Ayyubid caliphate (1171-1341 CE), founded by Salah ad-Din. This brilliant leader is best known for his battles against the Crusaders, driving them from Jerusalem in 1187 CE. His chivalrous behavior, in keeping with the traditions of *furusiyah*, included sending his personal physician to care for his enemy, Richard the Lionheart, when he was taken ill. Salah ad-Din is also known to have sent two horses to Richard upon hearing that his had been lost. The principles of *furusiyah* were so important to Salah ad-Din that he had a treatise on the subject written for him by Mardi ibn Ali al-Tarsusi. Shihab al-Sarraf, in his article “Furusiyah Literature of the Mamluk Period” in *Furusiyah*, vol. 1, notes that this is one of the oldest surviving examples from the twelfth century. Arabian horses used in the cavalry at this time were still obtained from the Bedouin tribes, however, the Ayyubid armies also used horses from other sources, including the Turks and Mamluks. This era was particularly important in the history of the Arabian breed because it was the first time the knights of Western Europe encountered these swift and beautiful horses and later exported them to their home countries.

While the Abbasids were the first to use soldier-slaves known as Mamluks in their armies, a



A page from a copy of Ibn Baktishu's treatise *Kitab manafi' al-hayawan* (Benefits of Animals) depicting a mare in estrus. This translation was prepared in Persian by the scribe 'Abd al-Hadi ibn Muhammad bin Mahmud ibn Ibrahim al-Maragh'i in the 13th century.

The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York  
The Pierpont Morgan Library / Art Resource, NY

succession of Mamluk sultans seized power in Egypt and ruled both Egypt and Syria for nearly three centuries. Despite a propensity for violence and bloody struggles for power, these soldier-slaves of primarily Greek, Armenian, or Russian heritage created a great empire and left a legacy of superb Islamic art and architecture. The Mamluk cavalry not only is renowned in Islamic history, but also must be considered among the finest the world has ever known. The Mamluks, led by Sultan Baybars, defeated the Mongols in 1260 CE at 'Ain Jalut in Palestine, effectively ending the Mongol invasion of the Islamic world and likely preventing further conquest by these fierce warriors. This decisive battle has often been evaluated by military historians because it was the first time the Mongol techniques of fighting were surpassed by the enemy. While the Mongols were superb horsemen and archers, James Waterson, in his book *The Knights of Islam* states that the Mamluks "put down a much higher rate of fire than any other force in the medieval world." He goes on to give considerable credit to the horses of the Mamluks, which were primarily Arabians or horses having a high percentage of Arabian blood and therefore possessed tremendous stamina:

It wasn't, however, only the rate of fire and range of their fire that failed the Mongols. It was also their mounts. Small steppe ponies cannot carry even lightly armoured troopers at full gallop for a protracted period of time; indeed, times as short as ten minutes have been suggested before a replacement mount would be required. The larger Arab horses, on the other hand, were able to carry a fully armoured man right through the course of a battle.

The Mongol horsemen generally traveled with several horses each and changed them frequently. They also customarily fought from the saddle, but toward the end of this particular battle, they dismounted. Waterson concludes that the Mongols, under intense fire, had no time to remount fresh horses, as was their custom. He states:

The reason for the Mongols dismounting from their horses was born of the total exhaustion of their horses, being outclassed in the very kind of warfare in which they excelled and the desperation that this realization engendered in the weary troopers. Put in the most basic terms, the Mongols were exemplars of the cavalry soldier, but the Mamluks of Baybars were its quintessence.

The principles of *furusiyah* rose to a new height during the Mamluk's rule. They expanded upon the earlier treatises and composed many works relating to the arts of horsemanship and war as well as to the importance of courage, valor and generosity. Sport involving horses was also popular and functioned as an important tool to improve riding and archery skills. Great hippodromes were constructed for the equestrian sports. The game of polo, imported by the Abbasids from the Persians, was frequently played, and another game involving shooting an arrow into a high target, called *qabaq*, was a showcase for the finest archers. Sultan Baybars was known to award purebred Arabian horses to those who achieved a perfect score in this test of skill. Horse racing was also extremely popular, and horses throughout the empire were brought to Cairo to compete before the sultans.

During the centuries that the Mamluks ruled, many of their sultans were passionate in their love for purebred Arabian horses. They sent envoys to the desert seeking the finest steeds of the Bedouin, paying enormous sums to acquire them and adorning them in unimaginable grandeur. During the processions of Sultan Baybars, for example, the streets were lined with Oriental rugs and musicians on horseback preceded an entourage of riders on bejeweled Arabians carrying the flags of the sultan. Matching stallions with saddle and bridles of exquisite ornamentation announced the arrival of the sultan himself, riding his own magnificent mount. Led horses of equal beauty followed. Judith Forbis, in *The Classic Arabian Horse* wrote of the processions of the Mamluks: "So spectacular were some of the celebrations that the chroniclers found it 'impossible to describe.'"

Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun, who ruled three separate times in the period from 1293 to 1341 CE, is said to have kept three thousand purebred Arabian horses, paying enormous sums to

collect the finest in the desert. Judith Forbis wrote of him:

El Nacer [sic] was enamored of the horses of the Arabs, and consequently created one of the most remarkable Arabian stud farms that ever existed in the Orient. He became an expert on the desert steeds he so avidly collected, knowing their genealogies as well as understanding the physical and mental qualities of the breed. He had a phenomenal memory when it came to his favorite subject, and recalled the names of all the persons who had provided him with horses, as well as the prices he paid.

The Mamluk Sultanate endured until 1517 CE, when it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Yet even after defeat, the Mamluks shared in the rule and wealth of Egypt until they were eventually massacred during the reign of Muhammad Ali in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Ottoman Empire was remarkable for both its longevity and its size – lasting more than six centuries and spanning three continents. Like other Islamic dynasties before them, the Ottomans' army made extensive use of the cavalry, although they employed many different types of horses. In *Furusiyya*, vol. 1, J. M. Rogers wrote in his article "Ottoman Furusiyya" about the types of horses used by their cavalry:

According to Ottoman sources, some of the most highly prized Turkish horses were bred on the Çukurova plain on the southern fringes of the Taurus mountains in southeastern Turkey, but the demand for cavalry steeds was so great that horses were drafted from all over Anatolia, as well as from Thessaly and Epirus. Arabian, Crimean Tatar, and Hungarian mounts were less numerous.

Rogers also related the remarks of the French traveler Ogier Ghyselen de Busbecq about the high value of purebred horses, including the Arabian:

A well-bred mare is sometimes exchanged for a hundred camels. It is not, however, the cheapness of the camel which should perhaps call for our wonder so much as the dearness of the mare and the price asked for it; for mares of this kind are so highly esteemed that one who possesses even one of them regards himself as a man of wealth.

The Ottoman cavalry enjoyed elite status among the military and was divided into four major sections. The highest rank was that of the *sipahis*, who were granted land by the sultans in return for their service. The *sipahis* also functioned as ceremonial bodyguards for the sultan and consequently were mounted on the finest horses. Like the Mamluks, the Ottomans lavishly adorned the horses of the nobility. Bridles and saddles were plated with gold and inset with precious jewels, and saddle cloths were decorated with magnificent embroidery. Rogers reported that by the eighteenth century there was a special treasury just for saddlery and horse trappings. He related the historian 'Isi's description of presents sent by the Ottomans for Nadir Shah in the eighteenth century:

Among them was a nose ornament for a horse (*burunsallik*) with an emerald drop and set with two emeralds, nine sapphires, and seven medium-sized and eighty-nine small diamonds on a granulated gold ground in open gold settings enameled green and deep blue...

Unlike the earlier Islamic dynasties, the Ottomans did not have a body of training, veterinary, or *furusiyia* manuscripts, despite the importance of horses and their cavalries to the empire. Ottoman art, however, frequently depicted hunting scenes or the horses of the sultans, and while some images bear little resemblance to Arabians, others clearly display characteristics of the breed. Yet the Ottoman Empire is of primary importance in the history of the Arabian horse because it was the venue by which many countries in the West were first introduced to this splendid breed.



**The Mamluks were some of the finest horsemen known in history. Purebred Arabian horses were highly valued during the centuries of the Mamluk rule.**

Lithograph by Carle Vernet

## **Islamic Art and the Arabian Horses of Persia and India**

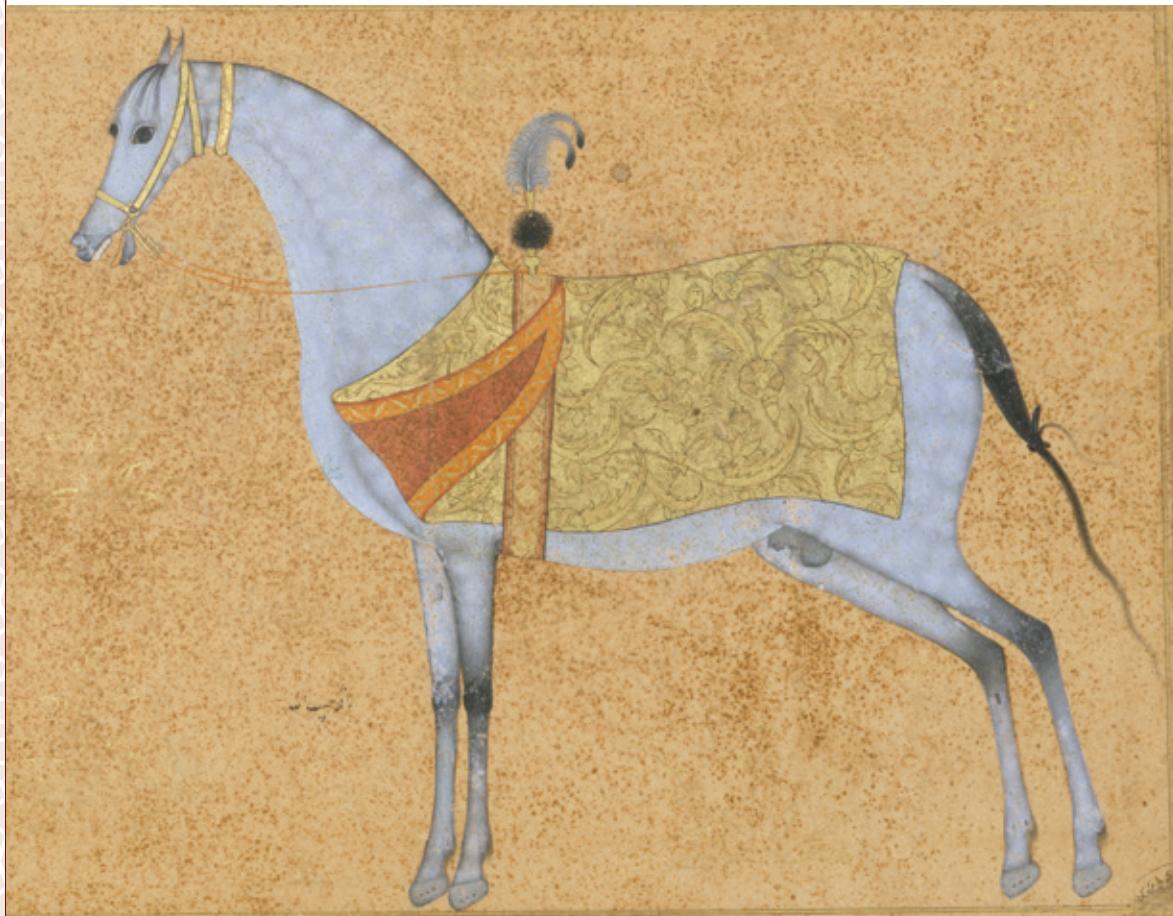
Islamic art testifies to the high regard for the Arabian that existed in both Persia and India after the Islamic conquest and includes some of the most beautiful works ever to depict the horse. Long before the coming of Islam, the horse was important in Persian culture and is the subject of numerous poems and legends. Horses continued to be associated with royalty, the hunt, sport and the military arts during the Islamic era. They are a common subject throughout Persian art and are seen on textiles and ceramics and in paintings and illuminated manuscripts. Although there were indigenous breeds of horses in Persia for centuries, much of this artwork depicts horses with the refined heads, arched necks and delicate limbs typical of the Arabian. By the sixteenth century, a genre of individual horse portraits emerged that is likely an influence for later portraits in India. Sheila Canby, in her article entitled "Persian Horse Portraits and Their Cousins" published in *Furusiyya*, vol. 1, states, "Most Persian and later Indian paintings of horses as prime subjects probably depict animals that would have been recognized in their day, even though their names are now forgotten." By the seventeenth century, however, portraits of Mughal horses were often identified by name. Certainly these works reflect the high esteem accorded exceptional mounts and their essential role in the histories of these Islamic empires.

The importation of Arabian horses to India pre-dates Islam and, once seagoing ships were of sufficient size to carry this type of cargo, there was a lively trade in horses from the Arabian Peninsula. There are many Indian legends referring to "sea horses" that likely arose from the arrival of Arabian horses by boat. This trade continued after the Islamic conquest and thousands of horses, primarily from ports in Oman, were shipped to India. There are additional references to importations of Arabians from western Arabia, Bahrain, Syria and Iraq to fulfill the high demand. While there were other types of horses present in India, the Arabians were the most highly prized and commanded extravagant sums. Records from the Mughal period list several sources for fine horses, including Persia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan, yet generally refer to the Arabian as the best breed. Like the members of most of the Islamic dynasties, both the Persians and the Indians believed their animals worthy of lavish adornment, and their artwork often depicts the horses with elaborate trappings.

**(Opposite page)**  
**Mohort Demonstrating his Stud.**  
Juliusz Kossak  
Oil on Canvas  
1858  
Warsaw National Museum  
Catalog # 152

**Portraits with a horse as the sole subject began appearing in late 16th century Persian art. This depiction of a grey stallion wearing an elaborate saddlecloth was painted by the artist Habib Allah during the Safavid period.**

Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley  
Purchase Fund for Islamic Art  
The Edward Joseph Gallagher III  
Memorial Collection  
Edward J. Gallagher, Jr. Bequest and  
Richard S. Perkins and Margaret  
Mushekan Gifts, 1992 (1992.51)  
©The Metropolitan Museum of Art /  
Art Resource, NY





CHAPTER 6

# The Spread of the Arabian Breed: BEYOND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

*He swims in the desert sea, my stallion,  
Carving the waves of sand.  
Snowy peaks he plows  
As a dolphin plows the breakers,  
Ever faster, still faster,  
Skimming over the gravelly footing.  
Higher, still higher,  
He soars from the dust like a cloud –  
A storm-cloud – this stable stallion of mine.  
The star on his forehead gleaming like the dawn,  
He tosses his ostrich-feathery mane to the wind.  
Fly, white-legged kite, oh fly!  
Vanish, footpaths; forest, recede!*

FROM "FARYS" BY ADAM MICKIEWICZ (1798-1855)  
IN TRIBUTE TO COUNT WACLAW RZEWUSKI, AS PUBLISHED IN  
"THE POLISH QUEST FOR ARABIAN HORSES" BY PETER HARRIGAN, SAUDI ARAMCO WORLD

## The History of the Arabian Horse in Europe

The first Arabian horses to arrive in Europe were probably those that accompanied the Arab conquest of Spain in the eighth century. Many of the Muslims in these armies were of Berber origin, however, so the majority of their horses may have been Barbs rather than purebred Arabians. Yet these North African horses, named for the Barbary Coast in their homeland, carried a significant measure of Arabian blood. The Barb was subsequently used to create breeds such as the Andalusian and Lusitano that were influential in the breeding of European horses during the following centuries. Thus, the first use of Arabian blood to improve local stock probably began in Spain several hundred years before purebred Arabian horses entered Europe in large numbers. Islamic traditions regarding the importance of equine genealogy also influenced Spain because the first written pedigrees of horses in Europe were recorded there.

During the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, the armies of the Crusaders encountered Arabian horses in the Near East, and many were brought back to Europe. While these horses were considered among the most precious spoils of war, there are no records of any attempt to perpetuate the breeding of purebreds during this period. The returning knights, however, had intimate knowledge of the stamina and beauty of the horses of the Muslims and may have been the first to create the aura of mystique that has continually surrounded the Arabian breed. It was through the later influence of the Ottoman Empire that the Arabian horse gained a wider popularity, eventually leading to the establishment of studs in Europe and the Americas devoted exclusively to the breeding of purebred Arabians.

Through both conflict and trade, there were centuries of interaction between the countries of Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The horses of the Ottomans, both purebreds and horses of predominantly Arabian origins, were extremely influential during Ottoman occupation of the countries of southeastern Europe. It soon became apparent that when the Ottoman stallions were crossed with the local horses the resulting offspring were superior in every regard. This development was not surprising considering that most horses in Europe at that time were a complete mixture of bloodlines, whereas the Arabians had been closely bred for their exceptional qualities for centuries. Horses of half-Arabian blood were particularly ideal as cavalry mounts. They possessed more speed, agility, and stamina than the native horses while requiring less feed to maintain their condition. They also inherited other useful traits from the Arabian, including hardiness and longevity. In addition, the invention of firearms for military use meant that heavily armored horses were no longer useful. Fast and highly maneuverable horses were now an advantage in this new type of warfare and these were the precise characteristics the Arabian horses possessed after generations of breeding by the Bedouin.



Napoleon I greatly admired the horses of the Mamluks and dressed his own Arabian stallion in their fashion. The works of the artists that traveled with him on his campaigns in Egypt also helped popularize the Arabian horse in Europe.

The Battle of the Pyramids, July 21, 1798  
Antoine-Jean Gros  
Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon,  
Versailles, France  
Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

Soon stallions of Arabian or "Oriental" bloodlines were highly sought after by the Europeans. Yet the concept of breeding purebred horses remained alien to Europe. The first known attempt, in the sixteenth century, took place in Poland. Horses had always been important in Polish military history and Poland was heavily influenced by the Ottoman Empire because of several conflicts over disputed territory, which meant their kings and nobles had continuing contact with the Ottoman steeds. King Sigismund II Augustus (1520-1572) was the farsighted ruler who first established a breeding program devoted exclusively to purebred Arabians. His Master of Horse, Adam Micinski, published a book in 1570 called *Of Mares and Stallions* which explained that the horses of the king's stud at Knyszyna were all of pure Arabian blood. Micinski further clarified the king's intent to breed these horses with no mixture of other horses, a concept far ahead of its time. The King rarely parted with any of his valuable Arabians, however, and after his death their breeding was neglected.

King Henri de Valois was the successor to King Sigismund II Augustus. He ruled only a short

time before fleeing Poland to take the throne of France (and chose a purebred Arabian from among those at Knyszyna to make his escape). The next Polish ruler, King Stephen Batory (1575-1586) obviously valued Arabian horses because he sent his equerry to Arabia to procure them from their homelands. Although the equerry was successful in obtaining Arabian horses, he was subsequently murdered in Constantinople and the horses stolen. The idea of traveling to the desert to obtain horses from the source, however, would soon take root and flourish for centuries.

By the seventeenth century, the number of Arabian horses in Europe had increased significantly, and the Arabian, with its prancing gait and aura of pride, soon became the preferred mount of the nobility. A growing fascination for all things Oriental during this time period was also a factor in this preference for Arabian horses. By 1663, Charles II of England had already imported at least one Arabian, and, in 1657, Oliver Cromwell expressed his interest in the breed as well. Donna Landry, in her book *Noble Brutes – How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture*, cites a letter from the Levant Company to Sir Thomas Bendish, ambassador at Constantinople, regarding Cromwell's desire for Arabians: "His Highness wants some good Arabian horses to furnish England with a beed [sic] of that Kind, and we have written to Aleppo to supply us with two of that sort." The extraordinary beauty and quality of the horses that arrived in England from the Ottoman Empire ensured they were greatly admired. Landry quotes the accolades of John Evelyn upon seeing three Turkish horses in 1684 that had been brought back from the siege of Vienna:

& with my Eyes never did I behold so delicate a Creature as was one of them...in all reguards beautifull & proportion'd to admiration, spirituous & proud, nimble, making halt, turning with that swiftnesse & in so small a compase as was incomparable, with all this so gentle & tractable...They trotted like Does, as if they did not feele the Ground...In a word, it was judg'd by the Spectators, (among whom was the King, Prince of Denmark, the Duke of Yorke, and severall of the Court Noble persons skilled in Horses, especially Monsieur Faubert & his sonn & Prevost, Masters of the Accedemie and esteemed of the best in Europe), that there were never seene any horses in these parts, to be compared with them.

Near the turn of the seventeenth century, three horses from the Near East arrived in England to become the foundation sires of the Thoroughbred breed. Although their heritage is the source of much speculation, the evidence is strong that at least two were purebred Arabians, and the third probably had a considerable measure of Arabian blood. All three became known by the names of their owners. The Byerley Turk was said to have been captured from the Turks at the siege of Buda in 1686 and, despite his name, was almost certainly a purebred Arabian. Thomas Darley imported the second of the foundation stallions in 1704 from Syria, while the third, the Goldophin Arabian, is thought to have been born in Yemen and then given by the Bey of Tunis to the King of France and later exported to England. When crossed with native English mares the offspring of these stallions were exceptional racehorses, and the popularity of racing soon led to the development of the Thoroughbred as a new breed. This recipe for the creation of new breeds was repeated again and again as Arabian horses became more widespread in Europe.

By the eighteenth century, several influential Europeans had begun breeding purebred Arabians. Peter the Great of Russia established the Imperial Stud and included Arabians in the breeding program. A Russian count, Alexey Orlov, obtained many Arabians and provided several to Catherine the Great, who, in 1772, owned twelve purebred Arabian stallions and ten purebred mares. Napoleon Bonaparte became an enthusiast of both the Arabian horse and their Mamluk riders after arriving in Egypt in 1798, and he often adorned his own Arabian stallions in their fashion. Many Arabian horses were brought back to France as a result of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. One of these, the stallion Marengo, was supposedly a great favorite of Napoleon's and was his courageous mount in many famous battles.

Various conflicts in Europe, and the Napoleonic wars in particular, took a heavy toll on the cavalry horses of many countries and provided the impetus to begin large-scale breeding programs to supply the military. These conflicts, however, also provided additional evidence that horses of Arabian blood endured the rigors of combat better than others. Erika Schiele, in her book *The Arab Horse in Europe*,



The Arabian horse became the preferred mount of the aristocracy of Europe during the nineteenth century. This lithograph depicts the Russian Czar Alexander II (1801-66) riding an Arabian stallion.

Victor Adam  
Lithograph printed by Lemercier, Paris  
Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris  
Giraudon / Art Resource, NY



**King Wilhelm I of Württemberg founded the Royal Weil Stud dedicated to the breeding of purebred Arabian horses. This important breeding program was later continued by the Marbach State Stud of Germany and remains influential to the present day.**

Albrecht Adam

cites a letter to General Daumas written by Napoleon's aide-de-camp, Count Lantivy:

The Arab horse withstood the exertions and privations better than the European horse. After the cruel campaign in Russia almost all the horses the Emperor had left were his Arabs. General Hubert, then a squadron leader, was only able to bring one horse out of his five back to France, and that was an Arab. Captain Simonneau, of the General Staff, had only his Arab left at the end, and so it was with me also.

The need for quality Arabian horses had been established throughout Europe by the nineteenth century, and many great studs were created in this era, including several that continue to the present day. The Weil Stud in Germany, founded in 1817 by King Wilhelm I of Württemberg, was dedicated to breeding purebred Arabians, and its bloodstock became highly influential throughout Europe. The Arabian breeding program was eventually combined with the historic Marbach State Stud where it was continued. Janów Podlaski, the State Stud of Poland also established in 1817, created a breeding program for purebred Arabians in a country where the nobles had already become known for their devotion to breeding these gallant horses. In Hungary, the blood of the Arabian had long been appreciated as well, and Kaiser Joseph II decreed in 1789 that a stud be created at Bébolna. By 1816 a decision was made to use only Arabian stallions for all of the stud's mares, and thus a purebred breeding program was created in addition to the herds of other horses. In the mid-nineteenth century, Queen Isabella II of Spain sent an emissary to the desert to acquire Arabian horses for her stud, and her son, King Alfonso XII, continued to breed purebreds. By 1893, a royal order established an army stud in Spain, the Yeguada Militar, which included purebred Arabians, as well as Andalusians.

## The Fabled Arabian Horses of Najd and the Abbas Pasha Manuscript

For centuries, the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, known as the Najd, remained relatively isolated from the outside world, yet was known as a source of the finest Arabian horses. The great dynasty of the al-Sauds, forebears to the modern rulers of Saudi Arabia, arose in the mid-seventeenth century in this region. The al-Saud's consolidation of power concerned the Ottoman rulers in Istanbul and, fearing the loss of control of the Holy Cities and western Arabia, the Ottomans sent Muhammad Ali of Egypt to Arabia to intervene. A series of wars ensued. While the initial Ottoman advances were thwarted by the al-Sauds, Muhammad Ali's son, Ibrahim Pasha, finally succeeded in capturing the al-Saud capital of Diri'yah in 1818, and hundreds of Arabia's finest horses were subsequently sent to Cairo.

One of the great leaders in al-Saud history, Amir Faisal ibn Turki (1785-1865), rose to power soon after the defeat by Ibrahim Pasha. Although he was determined to avenge the Ottoman plunder of his land, he was ultimately captured and sent to Cairo to be imprisoned in the Citadel. There he formed a friendship with Abbas Pasha I (1813-54), Muhammad Ali's grandson. How this relationship came about is unknown, but both men were passionate about Arabian horses and Abbas Pasha also admired the Arab peoples greatly, having once lived among the Ruala Bedouin. Amir Faisal eventually escaped from Cairo, purportedly with the assistance of Abbas Pasha, and returned to Arabia. With Amir Faisal's subsequent support, Abbas Pasha was able to obtain one of the greatest collections of Arabian horses ever known. In addition to his importation of horses, Abbas Pasha sent his emissaries to Arabia to gather an extensive history of these animals, meticulously recording their strains and stories from the Bedouin tribes. Abbas Pasha's chief scribe then compiled the handwritten accounts into a serious of manuscripts. This history, subsequently known as the Abbas Pasha Manuscript, was the first time the centuries of oral tradition surrounding the Arabian horse was preserved in written form, and remains an invaluable resource on the breed.

The Arabian horses of Abbas Pasha gained worldwide fame in their day, inspiring countless artists who ensured that these fabled horses became a standard of classic beauty for the breed. Abbas Pasha's horses were also a testament to the quality of the Arabians still in the hands of the Arabs, particularly those of the Najd region. William Gifford Palgrave, the first outsider and Englishman to visit Amir Faisal al Turki's stables in Arabia, confirmed that the horses of Najd were treasures beyond compare.

In *The Personal Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, he wrote:

Never had I seen nor imagined so lovely a collection. Their stature was indeed somewhat low; I do not think that any came fully up to fifteen hands ... but they were so exquisitely well shaped that want of greater size seemed hardly, if at all, a defect. Remarkably full in the haunches, with a shoulder of slope so elegant as to make one in the words of an Arab poet 'go raving mad about it' ... a head broad above, and tapering down to a nose fine enough to verify the phrase of 'drinking from a pint-pot' ... a most intelligent and yet a singularly gentle look, full eye, sharp thorn-like little ear, legs fore and hind that seemed as if made from hammered iron, so clean and yet so well twisted with sinew; a neat round hoof, just the requisite for hard ground; the tail set on or rather thrown out at a perfect arch; coats smooth and shining, and light; the mane long but not overgrown or heavy; and an air and step that seemed to say, 'Look at me, am I not pretty?' Their appearance justified all reputation, all value, all poetry.

## The Quest

While many Arabian horses were procured in the cities and towns of the Near East, the best horses remained in the desert with the Bedouin tribes. Fiercely proud of their horses, the Bedouin did not customarily sell mares, but occasionally agreed to offer young colts and stallions. This situation had satisfied the growing need for Arabian stallions to improve other types of horses, but as the demand for purebred Arabians grew, it was necessary to procure quality mares as well. As breeders became more discriminating, there was also greater concern about purity and the validity of horses' pedigrees. While it was possible to visit the tribes when they migrated near the larger cities in the Near East, a series of intrepid travelers became determined to seek the best horses in the heart of the desert.

One of the most fascinating of these travelers was Count Waclaw Seweryn Rzewuski (1785-1831) of Poland. As a young man he was intrigued by the accounts of his uncle, Count Jan Potocki, who had toured the Near East and North Africa. To pursue his interest, Rzewuski went to Vienna where he studied under two renowned Orientalists and learned Turkish and Arabic. He also founded the first Orientalist magazine in Europe, *Mines de l'Orient*, and wrote two articles in this publication devoted to the purebred Arabian horse, his greatest passion. In 1818, Rzewuski traveled to Syria where he visited many of the surrounding Bedouin tribes and purchased horses for the royal stud of Weil in Germany. In a later trip, he traveled throughout Arabia, including the central region of the Najd, and lived and fought alongside the Bedouin. He carefully studied their horse breeding practices, learning the lineage and strains of their most famous horses. On this second expedition he procured eighty-one stallions and thirty-three mares of the highest quality, many of which became influential in breeding programs throughout Europe. After his return to Poland, Rzewuski continued to dress in Arab fashion and carefully bred his Arabian horses according to the traditions of the Bedouin. By 1830 he owned eighty purebred mares of great quality, more than any other individual breeder in Europe at that time. Rzewuski's elaborate three-volume manuscript entitled "Sur les Chevaux Orientaux et provenants des Races Orientales" is housed in the Polish National Library and is a chronicle of his time in Arabia. This manuscript is unique in many regards and includes hundreds of pages of detailed drawings, history, geography, and ethnographic material, as well as his personal observations of the Bedouin and their horses.

Major Roger D. Upton was another important English traveler to Arabia. He had fought in the Crimea and observed the stamina and hardiness of Arabians, subsequently writing a memorandum to the War Office recommending the addition of Arab blood to improve the military and farm horses in Britain. In 1874 and 1875, Major Upton made trips to the desert to acquire purebred Arabians from the tribes. He makes clear his conviction that the true Arabian horse could be found only among the Bedouin in his book *Gleanings from the Desert of Arabia*:

It is only consistent and reasonable to believe that horses among the Arabs of the interior deserts have a better claim to be genuine than such as have come to us through foreign sources, from India, Syria, and the Turks, without any specific knowledge of their history or authentic record of their blood.



Count Waclaw Rzewuski of Poland was one of the most important European travelers to Arabia, importing more than one hundred Arabian horses to Europe in the early nineteenth century. Rzewuski chronicled his life among the Bedouin and his study of their Arabian horses in his fascinating three-volume manuscript "Sur les Chevaux Orientaux et provenants des Races Orientales."

Detail from Portrait of  
Count Waclaw Rzewuski  
Kazimierz Zwani  
1825  
Oil on canvas  
National Museum of Warsaw  
Catalog #336



Lady Anne Blunt, granddaughter of Lord Byron, was the first known Western woman to travel to the interior of Arabia. She and her husband, Wilfrid Blunt, imported many Arabian horses from the desert and founded the influential Crabbet Stud of England.



This painting by Edward Troye is a portrait of A. Keene Richards, the first American to personally travel to the Near East to import purebred Arabian horses. Richards is shown with the stallion Mokladi.

Detail from Mokladi  
Edward Troye  
1854  
Oil on canvas  
Keene R. Kelley Collection  
Catalog #335

Following the example of Major Upton, Wilfrid and Lady Anne Blunt also traveled to Arabia in search of horses, and the results of their journeys had a lasting impact on the Arabian breed. Lady Anne Blunt, the daughter of the Earl of Lovelace and granddaughter of Lord Byron, was a woman of many talents – scholar, adventurer, artist, musician, and equestrienne. In 1873, just four years after her marriage to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the couple began their first explorations of the Near East by camel and horseback. A goal of their travels was to procure authentic Arabian horses to provide the foundation stock for a stud in England. After this initial journey, Lady Anne devoted herself to the study of the Arabic language and literature and began a lifetime of research on the Arabian breed.

In 1879, the Blunts departed once again for the desert, this time traveling to the interior of Arabia, a journey only a handful of Westerners had made, and Lady Anne was the first woman among them. Her fascinating accounts of these journeys were published in two books, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates* and *A Pilgrimage to Nejd*. Of the Bedouin of the Najd and their Arabian horses she wrote: "Truly is that horse prized by them above all else in the world, believed in by them as being theirs in origin, and that from all time in an immeasurable past."

With imports from the desert and additional horses purchased in Egypt from the remnants of the famed breeding programs of Abbas Pasha I, the Blunts founded the Crabbet Stud in England and some time later a stud in Egypt near Cairo. The Crabbet horses were an inspiration to Arabian horse breeders around the world and became the most significant bloodline group in modern Arabian horses.

## The Arabian Horse in the United States

The influence of the Arabian horse in the United States, just as in Europe, was first through horses that contained some measure of Arabian blood rather than through purebred Arabians. Several early American breeds were created using horses with substantial Arabian blood, such as the Morgan, the Quarter Horse, the Standardbred, and the American Saddlebred. One of the earliest accounts of an Arabian imported to North America is that of a horse called Lindsay's Arabian, brought to Connecticut in 1766 prior to the Revolution. George Washington supposedly admired several horses of the Connecticut cavalry and subsequently learned they were the sons and daughters of this stallion. After his discovery, a son of Lindsey's Arabian became one of Washington's most famous personal mounts. Washington then directed that his own mares at Mount Vernon be bred to this Arabian stallion, thereafter owning several of his sons and daughters. There are records of other early imports as well, but their purity is often questionable.

The first Arabians of authentic origin were imported to the United States by A. Keene Richards of Kentucky who made two trips to the Near East in 1853 and 1855, importing horses both times. Richards was a dedicated horseman and carefully selected the horses himself after spending time among the Bedouin. On his second journey, Richards was accompanied by the famous equine painter, Edward Troye, who painted portraits of many of the horses purchased by Richards, as well as scenes from the places they visited. Although both importations of Arabians to the United States included colts and stallions, only two mares were included in the group. Richard's goal in procuring these Arabians was to improve upon his Thoroughbreds, and on this subject he wrote, "Some English writers contend that a degeneracy is taking place, and that the best Arab blood must be resorted to." Several of the descendants of his Arabians did well in racing, but his purebred Arabians did not breed on because of the civil war.

A stallion named Leopard, who was presented to General Ulysses S. Grant as a gift when he visited the Ottoman sultan in Turkey, was one of the next importations. Gladys Brown Edwards, in her book *The Arabian – War Horse to Show Horse*, quotes Grant as saying, "It was given to understand through the interpreter that the Sultan desired to present me with a stallion and I was asked to select one. I was told that there was no horse in the stable whose pedigree could not be traced for six hundred years." The stallion Grant selected was admired by Randolph Huntington, a well-known breeder of Standardbreds, who was enthusiastic about adding the blood of the Arabian to his herd. Huntington imported an Arabian mare to be bred to Leopard and soon developed a program of breeding pure Arabians.

In 1893, a group of Arabian horses was brought from the Near East by the Hamidie Society of Syria to perform in the Chicago World's Fair. A devastating fire caused financial hardship for the society

and the horses were subsequently sold at auction and remained in the United States. These beautiful Arabians attracted the eye of a horseman named Homer Davenport who purchased several of them from Peter Bradley of Massachusetts and later entered into a partnership with him. A well-known political cartoonist, Davenport used his connections with President Theodore Roosevelt to request authorization for a trip to the Near East to procure Arabians.

Roosevelt agreed, stating in a letter to Davenport from the White House dated January 1, 1906, "Anything you want I should like to do anyhow, and when it comes to dealing with Arabian horses I would take you up with double zeal." Davenport journeyed to Turkey in 1906, obtaining the right to travel in the region from the Ottoman sultan. In a breach of protocol that may have been accidental, Davenport visited Akmet Haffez, a Bedouin liaison between the Anazeh tribe and the Ottoman government, before he paid his regards to the governor of Syria. Haffez, therefore, felt particularly honored by Davenport and gave him a famous war mare and accompanied him to the desert to be certain that Davenport was offered horses of the finest quality and pedigrees from his fellow Anazeh tribesmen. Davenport chose twenty-seven horses on his historic trip, and his breeding program became extremely influential in the United States. He wrote in the preface of his 1909 book *My Quest for the Arabian Horse*:

This book has not been written with any idea that it will add to literature. Indeed, my primary object in going to the Syrian desert was not to see things and then over-describe them in a book; I had no use for souvenir spoons or Turkish rugs. My purpose was but for one thing, and that was to obtain Arab mares and stallions of absolute purity of blood that I could trace as coming from the great Anezech tribe of Bedouins. That was my fixed idea in undertaking the journey.

Enthusiasm for the Arabian horse grew in the United States, and, in 1908, a registry was formed. The prominent early breeders of Arabians included the cereal magnate W.K. Kellogg, who imported several horses from the Crabbet Stud in England in the 1920s. His Sunday showings of his Arabian horses at the Kellogg Ranch, often accompanied by the Hollywood stars of the day, attracted many to the breed. Another prominent breeder was William Randolph Hearst, who had one of the largest herds in the United States and also arranged an expedition to the Near East to import horses from the desert. The U.S. Army, understanding the valuable qualities of the breed, maintained a purebred Arabian horse breeding program that included Polish Arabians taken as spoils of war. In the years that followed, the United States became home to the largest number of purebred Arabians in the world.

## The Influence of Art on the Spread of the Arabian Horse

The prominence of the Arabian horse as a subject in art contributed greatly to their spread throughout the world and remains an important element in sustaining the breed's popularity. The Arabian horse is the embodiment of equine beauty, in part because the pride and dignity reflected in its fundamental nature transcend the harmony of its physical form. This combination of physical and spiritual attributes has inspired artists throughout the centuries, and their works portraying the Arabian horse grace many of the most prestigious museums in the world.

A major influence on the horse in art was made by the eighteenth century English artist George Stubbs. He revolutionized equine art by conducting detailed anatomical studies that led to his ability to realistically depict an individual horse and the characteristics that reflect its personality.



Homer Davenport, a well-known political cartoonist, was an important early breeder of Arabian horses in the United States. He traveled to Syria in 1906 to obtain purebred Arabians from the Anazeh Bedouin and is shown here with the stallion Haleb.



The renowned French painter Eugène Delacroix depicted many scenes in North Africa of Arabs and their horses.

Moroccan Saddling his Horse  
Eugène Delacroix  
Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia  
Scala / Art Resource, NY



Alfred de Dreux is another important nineteenth century French artist who often chose Arabian horses as his subject. His lavish depictions of the breed include many famous stallions from the royal stables of this time period.

Arab Thoroughbred  
Alfred de Dreux  
c. 1846  
Oil on Canvas  
Louvre, Paris, France  
Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

Stubbs painted several purebred Arabian horses, and the majority of his work depicted horses that possessed significant "Oriental" blood. His dramatic portrait of Whistlejacket is an excellent example of the latter because this stallion was predominantly Arabian. Unique for its time, the stallion is the sole subject of the painting and free of any human restraint. The eye of the horse, reflecting a keen intelligence, looks out of the painting to engage the viewer. This cerebral connection with the human observer is typical of the Arabian horse and is a characteristic that is seen in almost all portrayals of the breed that followed.

Dr. Karin Thieme, in her article "The Arabian Horse in Art" published in *Asil Arabians V*, elaborates on the emergence of Arabian horses in the genres of both Orientalism and Romanticism:

The turn from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought a real flood of art depicting noble horses. A long, principally French generation of painters started with Antoine Baron Gros, who had accompanied the young General Bonaparte in his Egyptian campaign of 1798-99. Gros's pictures always received admiration at the Salon, the official annual art exhibition in Paris. They were a source of stimulation for many of his contemporaries. His aristocratic Arabian stallions of the Generals Bonaparte and Murat became influential, for example, in the depictions of horse by Delacroix and Gericault. Artists and art lovers, riders and breeders, were all equally infatuated with the beauty of the Arabian. The 19<sup>th</sup> century became the era of the noble pure-bred horse.

Members of the aristocracy throughout Europe were routinely depicted on Arabian horses with the regal bearing of their mounts a reflection of the nobility of their riders. Yet these portraits were the exclusive domain of their owners, and it was the emergence of lithography that gave the general population a wider accessibility to Arabian horse in art. The French painter Carle Vernet, son of the

noted artist Claude Joseph Vernet, was one of the first to embrace this technique, meticulously creating his drawings on stone so that they could be reproduced as lithographs. His dramatic depictions of the horses of the Mamluks are the epitome of Arabian equine art and were a powerful influence on many other important artists.

Carle Vernet's son, Horace Vernet, continued the tradition of his father in making the Arabian horse a common subject and traveled to the Near East to study the Arabian horse in its homelands. Théodore Géricault was one of the famous students of Carle Vernet, and his portrayals of the Arabian horse are particularly powerful and compelling. Another artist with a connection to the Vernet family is the Polish national painter Juliusz Kossak, who executed many exquisite paintings of Arabian horses, both in the military realm and as the mounts of the many Polish nobles who were entranced with the breed.

Several renowned artists were inspired to depict Arabian horses as a result of their travels to North Africa. The influential French painter Eugène Delacroix often chose horses as his subject. Thieme writes of his depictions of Arabian horses: "They are active, fiery purebreds which are able to stand up equally well to the lion on the hunt or the enemy's sword in battle." Eugène Fromentin, a writer as well as a painter, was heavily influenced by Delacroix and spent considerable time in North Africa, as did the German artist Adolph Schreyer.

While English racehorses and hunters were the primary focus of sporting art, many of the most famous artists of this genre also painted Arabians. John Frederick Herring, Sr. used the white Arabian stallion Imam as a favorite model, and both Henry Alken and Edwin Landseer were also inspired to paint the breed.

Some of the most opulent depictions of Arabian horses were painted by Alfred de Dreux, and his work includes portrayals of many famous Arabian stallions of various royal stables. The paintings and lithography of Victor Adam are also particularly notable for their depictions of Arabian horses in their natural habitat, and his subjects became a model of classic type for generations of Arabian horse breeders.

## The Arabian Horse Today

There are now more than 440,000 living Arabian horses around the world, and thousands of breeders are devoted to continuing the legacy of this magnificent breed. The World Arabian Horse Organization, founded in 1970, currently sanctions the official registration of purebred Arabian horses in fifty-nine countries with several additional countries in the process of studbook approval. The greatest numbers of Arabians in the past century have been located in the Americas, Europe, and Australia. In the early 1990s, however, a resurgence of interest in Arabian horses began taking place throughout the Near East and the Arabian Peninsula. Visionary breeders, realizing that these animals are an essential part of their cultural heritage, began importing additional Arabian horses from around the world. The resulting renaissance of horse breeding has meant that many of the finest Arabian horses once again "drink the wind" of their desert homelands.

Today's enthusiasts value their Arabian horses in such diverse roles as companions, riding horses, show horses, and race horses. They also share a deep appreciation of the historical role of the Arabian horse and understand that they are stewards of an animal that has been precious to humans for centuries. An enduring symbol of beauty, nobility, and pride, the Arabian horse has consistently transcended cultural and political barriers to become the most influential equine in history.

*She is one of those steeds of race that stretch themselves fully in their gallop,  
Springing and light of foot, pressing on in her eagerness, her longing is  
the far-extended desert, plain giving unto plain...*

*And I will keep her as my own as long as there is a presser for the olive, and  
so long as a man, barefoot or shod, wanders on the face of the earth.*

FROM THE SEVENTH-CENTURY POEM "MUZARRID OF YAZID"  
TRANSLATED BY SIR CHARLES LYALL



THE EXHIBITION

# *a* Gift FROM THE Desert

The Art, History and Culture  
of the Arabian Horse



### 1 Standard of Ur

Tomb PG 779, Royal Cemetery, Ur, southern Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic III, 2600-2450 BCE  
Shell, lapis lazuli, and red limestone  
L: 47 cm, H: 20 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 121201

The Standard of Ur is one of the most famous artifacts in antiquity. Originally, the complex scenes depicted in two mosaic panels were mounted on a tapered, elongated, triangular wooden box, inlaid with shell, lapis lazuli and red limestone attached with bitumen. It is called a "standard" because the excavator, Leonard Woolley, found it lying beside the shoulder of a man who was thought to have supported the box on a pole, but there is little evidence for this function and it may instead have been some form of lidded box.

The first panel shows scenes of a battle and its aftermath. In the center of the top register is the most important person, probably a ruler, wearing battle dress and helmet. Behind him is a procession of three men with staffs and a battle wagon pulled by male donkeys with a man

walking behind the vehicle. In front of the central figure, his soldiers present bound, nude enemy captives.

The second register shows an orderly phalanx of marching soldiers on the left. On the right, soldiers are dispatching the enemy in various ways and leading them off.

The bottom register illustrates the king's battle wagons, each pulled by a team of four donkeys, and carrying a driver and a warrior. The gait of the asses changes from left to right across the register, from walking, to cantering, to full gallop. The naked and dead bodies of their enemies lying beneath the animals signify victory for the ruler shown in the first register.

The donkeys shown in this panel are adorned with tufted neckbands and collars with long fringe hanging down in front. The two flanking equids wear hackamores, while the central pair seems to be yoked and controlled by nose rings. The reins run from the team to the driver, being threaded through rein rings. The rein rings helped with control of the animals and kept the reins from getting tangled. Similar rein rings were recovered in the excavations of

the Royal Cemetery.

The other side of the Standard has a more peaceful theme. The top register depicts a religious banquet, with a significant person, probably the ruler, wearing a flounced skirt, seated on a throne and attended by servants. There are six seated guests, each holding a cup in his right hand. On the right is a musician holding a lyre; the figure beside him may be a singer.

The second register shows mostly bald men wearing fringed skirts carrying fish and leading bulls, goats, and rams. The livestock and the fish symbolize the two environs of southern Sumer, the pastures and the marshes.

The bottom register depicts different men, wearing different hairstyles and clothing, representing the people from northern Sumer, near Kish. Some individuals are carrying bags of produce, while others have heavy backpacks supported by headbands. Donkeys are being led by nose rings by other men.

The two panels of the wooden box represent the two aspects of the ruler. The first is his role as military leader and the second is his function as religious leader and person responsible for the successful production of the land.



## **2 Battle Wagon Modeled after the Standard of Ur**

Replica based on depictions in the Standard of Ur, Royal Cemetery, Ur, southern Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic III, 2600-2450 BCE  
Wood, vinyl  
Wagon: L: 2 m, W: 1 m, H: 1.76 m  
Handle: L: 2.43 m, W: 10.2 cm, D: 35.6 cm  
Yoke: L: 2.21 m, W: 10.2 cm, D: 19 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Full-sized replica of the battle wagons depicted in the battle scene on the Standard of Ur. These precursors to the chariot had two axles, four disc wheels (made from two pieces of wood bound together), a long board that forms the floor of the two-man cab, and a high front barrier to shield the driver and archer from incoming missiles. A quiver for spears was mounted onto the front of the vehicle. The driver stood in the front part of the cab, with the warrior in back, wielding a spear or axe. It was made by the students of St. John's School, Epping (Essex), England, under the direction of Mr. Duncan Noble, in the late 1970s.

## **3 Rein Ring with Figure of Donkey or Onager**

Ur, southern Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic III, 2600-2450 BCE  
Ring of silver, figure of electrum  
H: 13.5 cm, W: 10 cm, Th 5.7 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 121348

This silver rein ring displays a delicate figure of a donkey in electrum (gold-silver alloy) mounted on top. The donkey is the earliest known example of lost wax casting in gold or electrum, however, its fine design and execution suggest that the method had been known for some time.

The rein ring was found in Queen Puabi's tomb, PG 800, in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, fixed on a pole of a sledge (wheelless vehicle) near the crushed skeletons of two oxen that pulled it. The earliest wheeled vehicles were also pulled by oxen, followed by donkeys, and finally horses. The rein ring probably would have been attached to the pole by a pin at the center of the arched base and leather straps wrapped over the hooks on both sides. The reins passed through the rings to the collars of the two oxen. Similar rein rings have been found at Kish, in central Mesopotamia.





#### 4 Headband or Fillet

Burial PG 153, Ur, southern Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic III, 2600-2450 BCE  
Gold  
L: 32 cm, W: 2.8 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 16686 (U.8173)  
Drawing by Charles Henneberry

This headband or fillet was probably originally attached to a leather backing via holes pierced into the gold strip at both ends. After it broke in antiquity, it was reattached to its backing by sewing. Four stitch holes are still preserved on either side of the break.

Burial PG 153 was a single inhumation in which the body was covered with a reed mat. The grave also contained stone bowls, a copper bowl, a copper pin with a lapis lazuli head, a cylinder seal of lapis lazuli, and various beads of gold, lapis lazuli, and other semiprecious stones.

The gold fillet is decorated with a punctate patterned border, rosettes at both ends, and a series of incised animal and human figures. The figures, from left to right, include a striding bull eating from a blooming plant, a ram, a bearded man who

is kneeling on one knee and grasping the tail of one bull and the beard of another animal, a ewe giving birth, a ram with his head turned and forelegs on a blooming plant, a stag, a goat bound in a basket, two bearded men in kilts facing each other holding unidentifiable objects (possibly animal parts), a man riding an animal while carrying a goad or other implement in his right hand, and a fat-tailed sheep. The animals are all moving away from the center, which features a simplified drawing of the "Ram Caught in a Thicket," which is

depicted elsewhere in a famous piece from the site.

The depiction of a man riding an animal on the far right is one of the oldest pieces of evidence for riding in the Near East, or indeed anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, it is not clear which species it is. It could be a donkey, donkey-onager hybrid, horse, or even a bovid. Interestingly, the man is seated in the middle of the back of the animal, not farther back in the "donkey seat". He is riding bareback, with no indication of a bridle.



#### 5 Clay Tablet with Seal Impression of Horse and Rider

Drehem, Iraq  
Sumerian, Third Dynasty of Ur period, 2037-2029 BCE  
Clay  
L: 4.5 cm, W: 3.8 cm  
Dr. David Owen

This seal impression, found on an economic tablet record, inscribed in cuneiform, is the oldest representation of horseback riding in the world. It is dated to the reign of King Shu-Suen, fourth king of the Third Dynasty of Ur, who reigned from ca. 2037-2029 BCE. The original cylinder seal that made the impression has never been found, but its partial impression had been known from a group of previously published tablets, although not then recognized as a horse and rider. Even today, it stands as the only depiction of a horse and rider among the thousands of seal impressions on tablets and original cylinder seals known from the period. It is the personal seal of Abakala, the scribe, the son of Lu-Ningirsu.

It is likely this depiction is of a horse, rather than a donkey, because the tail is long and lush, rather than tasseled, and the man is seated in the middle of the animal's back. He is holding a stick in his right hand and a spear in his left.



### 6 Model Straddle Car

Kish, southern Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic III, 2600-2350 BCE  
Baked clay  
L: 5.3 cm, W: 4.5 cm, H: 6.8 cm  
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
AN1924.280 (car)  
AN1925.317-8 (wheels, not the original ones)

This hand-modeled straddle car has a tall, rectangular front rising to horn-shaped projections. The hole for the high, arched pole runs from the lower center of the front into the body, while the hole for the axle for a single set of plain solid wheels runs transversely below the front. The saddle-seat with a high back was for a single occupant.

This type of two-wheeled clay chariot became the standard in the early 2nd millennium BCE.



### 7 Model Battle Car

Kish, southern Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic III, 2600-2350 BCE  
Baked clay, painted  
H: 12 cm, W: 11.6 cm  
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
AN1925.291 a-d

This hand-modeled battle car has a buff fabric with linear decoration in red paint. It resembles those shown in the Standard of Ur fairly closely. The construction of this early vehicle includes four solid wheels, a platform with a projecting step in the rear, and a sloping front.



### 8 Figurine of an Equid and Rider

Syria  
Early Bronze Age IV-Middle Bronze Age I, 2300-1800 BCE  
Baked cream-colored clay  
H: 8 cm  
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
AN1998.73

This hand-modeled figurine of a man riding an equid

demonstrates the awkward equestrianism of this early time in the Near East. The man, who is wearing an incised headband, is seated very close to the animal's neck, clutching it just below the ears. The eyes of the man and beast are applied clay rings. The animal's large ears and short tail imply that it was a donkey or donkey/onager hybrid rather than a horse. The beast has an applied strip of clay between the eyes and a second incised band of clay below its head on the upper neck that may represent a bridle and neck collar. The figures are very stylized.



### 9 Jar with Donkeys Pulling a Battle Wagon

Khafajah, Iraq  
Sumerian, Early Dynastic II, circa 2800 BCE  
Ceramic  
H: 34.3 cm, Dia: 30.5 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 123293

This polychrome, lidded jar is illustrated with a four-wheeled battle wagon pulled by four donkeys, scenes of feasting and music, a goat, a bird, and the Master of the Animals holding up two beasts. It was painted with red and black pigments on a white slip and originally had a lid of skin to keep the contents secure and free of dust and flies.



## **10 Equid with a Covered Litter Containing a Rider**

Syria

Middle Bronze Age, 2000-1600 BCE

Terra cotta, cream slip on buff fabric

L: 6.2 cm, W: 3.4 cm, H: 6.5 cm

Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
AN1913.452

This hand-modeled figurine shows one means of transporting people, an equid with a litter cover. Inside the litter is a tiny human figure with a prominent pinched nose and no other features, sitting astride far back on the

animal. The gender of the person is not apparent. The equid's muzzle is pierced through horizontally, presumably to hold reins that have since disappeared. The litter cover rises directly from the upper legs on each side. Incised herringbone patterning on the litter must represent the woven material from which it was made.

## **11 Plaque Mold and Modern Plaque of a Young Rider**

Mesopotamia, southern Iraq

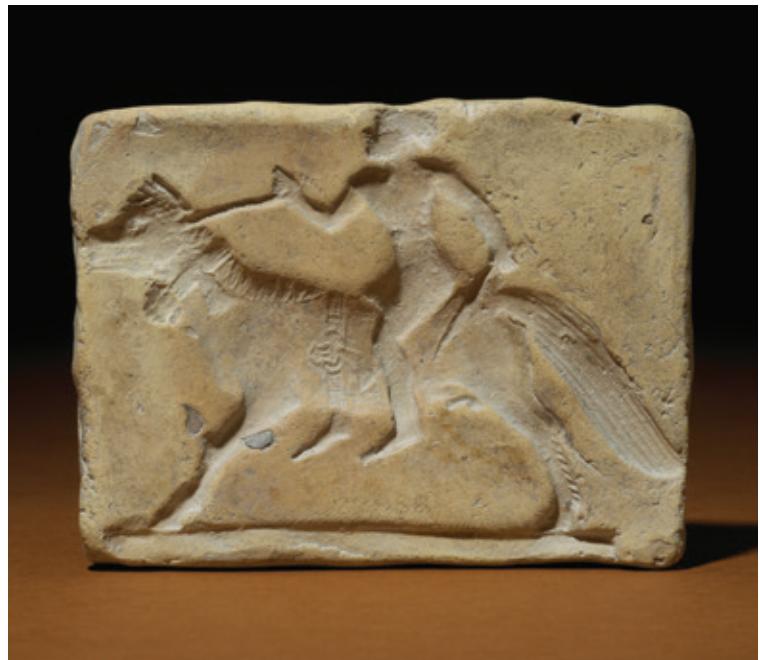
Old Babylonian, 2000-1800 BCE

Baked clay (mold) and resin (modern cast)

L: 9.8 cm, W: 7.3 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 22958

This plaque mold is one of the early representations of riding, probably dating to just after the conquest of the Dynasty III of Ur by the Elamites and Amorites.



The plaque mold shows a young male rider with a possible rein in his left hand and riding crop or stick in his right. He is sitting far back on the animal's croup, in the "donkey seat," but the animal's small ears and flowing tail would suggest it is a stallion. Because of the short muzzle and the collar around its neck,

it has also been called a mastiff. However, the feet more closely resemble those of a horse than a dog, and the boy's feet are some distance from the ground, even for a small child on a large canine. The best explanation may be that the artist was not familiar with horses or that the horse was a juvenile. There is a girth strap for the rider to grip.

## **12 Model Straddle Car**

Ur, southern Iraq

Old Babylonian, 19th-18th century BCE

Terra cotta

L: 7 cm, W: 8 cm, H: 17 cm

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology  
31-43-356 (U.16345)

This model represents a straddle car, an early vehicle in which the driver sits or stands astride a center pole and two or four equids are harnessed to the pole by a yoke. The one shown here has a high front and a transverse perforation for the axle. The wheels were not found with the body of the vehicle. The large hole in the body must have received the pole.

The relief on the upright portion shows a composite creature, commonly known as a bull-man, holding a door post. Above him is a crescent, representing the moon or moon god (*Nanna* in Sumerian, *Sin* in Akkadian), and a sun disk, representing the sun god (*Utu* in Sumerian, *Shamash* in Akkadian). The two symbols are shown on stands, as real models might have had for support.

The bull-man has a human upper torso and head, although with bull's ears, and the lower body and legs of a bull. He is wearing a horned crown with apparently three tiers of horns, topped by a disk that may represent the sun. The horned crown is worn by all Mesopotamian deities. He is shown facing forward here, holding a doorpost, which was common.

The bull-man is known by the Akkadian term *kusarikku*, a term which means bison.

*Kusarikku* is associated with the sun god (*Shamash*), perhaps because the bison is at home in the eastern mountains, distant lands traversed only by the sun. On a Neo-Babylonian tablet commemorating the foundation of Shamash's temple at Sippar, bull-men support the sun gods throne.

The model straddle car was found in the small temple at Ur dedicated to the god *Hendursag*. Also found there was a large (61 by 23 cm) terra cotta plaque, with a relief of a bull-man holding a door post, at the southwest jamb of the front door. Presumably an identical plaque would have stood at the opposite jamb so the bull-men could ward off evil.





**13 Cylinder Seal Depicting a Battle Wagon Pulled by Four Horses**

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Old Assyrian, 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE

Black hematite

H: 24 mm, Dia. 12 mm

The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 89654



This Assyrian cylinder seal depicts a warrior standing in a four-wheeled battle wagon similar to the earlier one from Ur, but this time pulled by a team of four equids thought to be horses, rather than donkeys. In front of the horses are seven severed human heads and two birds. Another bird is positioned above the horses.



**14 Harness Fitting**

Southern Iraq  
Babylonian, 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE  
Copper alloy  
W: 11.5 cm, H: 11.5 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 123899

This probable harness fitting has two nude female figures standing on either side of the rein loops. It would have been mounted to the draft pole to prevent the reins from getting tangled.

**15 Rein Ring with Figures of Two Goats and a Tree**

Acquired at Harsin, western Iran  
Middle Elamite, 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Copper alloy  
W: 8.4 cm, H: 16.5 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 122700

This Elamite rein ring depicts two goats with their bodies in profile, their heads facing forward, and their forelimbs braced against a tree.





### <sup>16</sup> Cylinder Seal Depicting a Lion Attacking a Winged Horse

Provenience Unknown  
Middle Assyrian, circa 1250-1200 BCE  
Pink Chalcedony  
H: 4.1 cm, Dia: 1.6 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 129572

On this seal, a rearing lion and winged horse fight while a foal (still wingless) stands between them; above them is a symbol of unknown meaning. The distinctive triangular composition of this seal is characteristic of the time of Assyrian King Tukulti-Ninurta I, who reigned between 1243-1207 BCE.



### <sup>17</sup> Man Reclining in a Cart

Tyre, Lebanon  
Phoenician, 7th century BCE  
Terra cotta  
H: 12.7 cm, W: 13.9 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 91567

This hollow figure depicts a man resting in a cart pulled by unidentifiable beasts. The bearded man is wearing a hat with a large brim and a long cloth draped over his left shoulder. The cart has two disc wheels.

### <sup>18</sup> Horse and Bearded Rider

Tyre, Lebanon  
Phoenician, 6th-7th century BCE  
Terra cotta  
H: 14.5 cm, W: 9 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 93092

This baked clay figure is of a bearded rider donning a pointed cap and Persian costume. The man has a large nose and eyes. He is sitting in the forward seat, holding the head of the horse. The equid has a short muzzle, but the tail indicates it is meant to be a horse. It seems to be wearing a neck collar. There are extensive remains of original red and black paint all over the horse and its rider.



### **19 Horse and Rider**

Southern Turkey  
Neo-Hittite, 900-750 BCE  
Polychrome terra cotta  
H: 7 cm  
All Souls College, University of Oxford

At Carchemish, large numbers of terra cotta animal figures were produced over a long span of time. In 1911, nine horse effigies were uncovered in just one late Neo-Hittite house there. Additional figurines were discovered at other sites in the vicinity. T.E. Lawrence sent several to the Ashmolean

Museum and kept this one in his rooms at All Souls College after the War. He later gave it to Lionel Curtis.

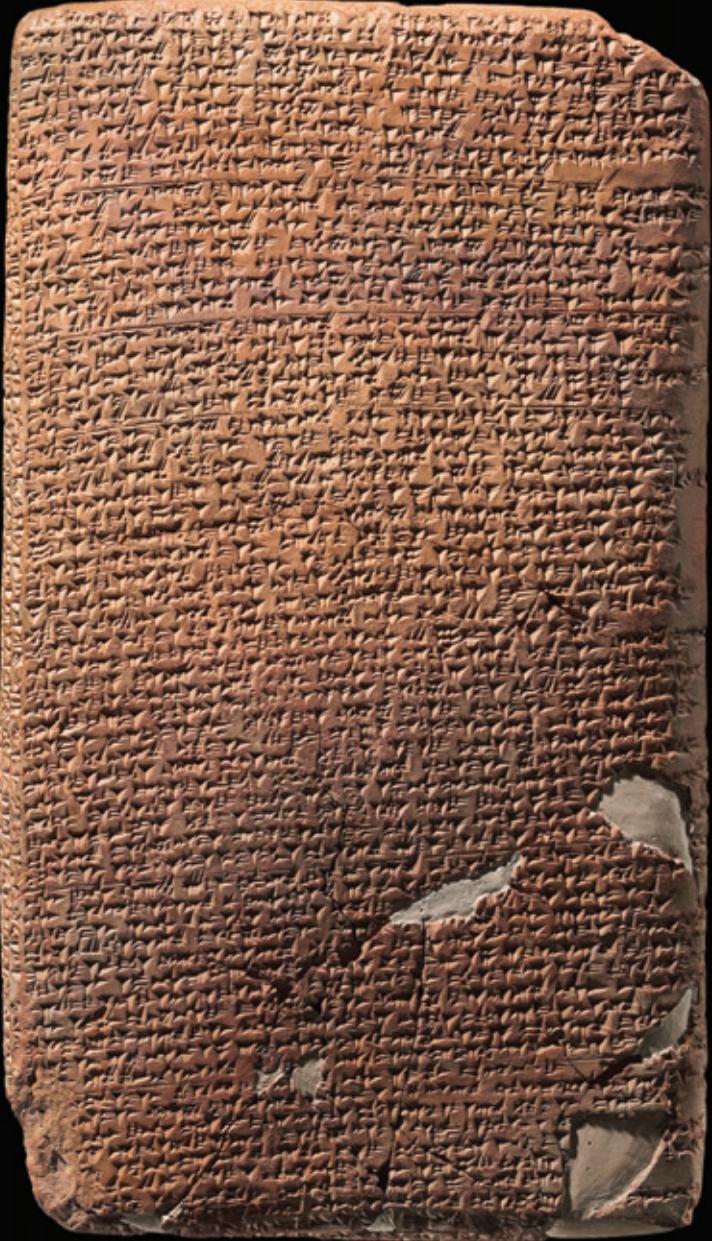
This stylized figurine shows a horse with an arched neck or erect mane being ridden by a man who is seated very far forward, with legs straight and parallel to the horse's forelimbs. The bearded rider dons a red garment with a hood and braces himself by holding the animal's neck. The crosshatching on the horse and man's legs may represent some form of armor.



### **20 Horse and Rider**

Carchemish region, southern Turkey  
Neo-Hittite/Assyrian 700-600 BCE  
Baked clay  
H: 10.1 cm, W: 2.7 cm  
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
AN1914.108

This well-preserved figurine has panels of painted decoration consisting of black lines and dots with red infilling. The legs are made from clay wedges with two projections to indicate hooves. The horse's mane, ears and long tail are modeled, while the eyes are painted black. A saddlecloth is also represented in paint. The rider sits in a very forward seat against the horse's neck, with neither his arms nor legs depicted. His facial features include a pinched nose, applied pellet eyes, and a beard detailed in black paint. He dons a cap that has its top folded over sideways.



## 21 Kikkuli Tablet IV, A Chariot Horse Training Text

Hattusas (Bogazköy), Turkey

Hittite, early 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE

Baked clay

W: 16 cm, H: 28.5 cm

Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin

VA 6693

By the second half of the second millennium BCE, two-wheeled chariots pulled by horses, composite bows, and battering rams were revolutionizing warfare in Mesopotamia and Syria. The chariot, for example, is credited in large part for the Hittite victory over the Egyptians at Qadesh on the Orontes River, in Syria, in 1275 BCE.

Although it is evident that training and breeding of chariot horses had to have been critical, we have scant evidence, with the exception of the Kikkuli Tablets and a few later examples of training texts. The five Kikkuli tablets, written in cuneiform, are named after a Hurrian-Mitannian horse trainer who authored Tablet I, but there appear to have been several different authors involved. The writers were probably not native Hittite speakers, since there are numerous grammatical mistakes and Aryan and Hurrian technical terms are incorporated in the texts. The numbering of the tablets and their sequential

description of the training schedule indicate that they constitute one comprehensive work.

Apparently, the Hittites commissioned Hurrian-Mitanni horse trainers to write this detailed training manual for conditioning chariot horses for battle. Instructions for the rigorous training include step-by-step instructions on feeding, watering (or at times withholding food or water), exercising over different distances with different speeds and gaits, harnessing, bathing, resting, and veterinary care. This is the oldest example of interval training for horses, with gradual increases in demands through the 184 days of the program.

Tablet IV, shown here, was found at the Hittite capital of Hattusas, in Building E, which was probably part of the king's apartments inside the palace complex of Büyükkale. It was discovered in an archive. This tablet begins on Day 169 and runs through to the end of the program, on Day 184. Although repetitive when compared to the previous tablets, it does discuss a special bit and is the only reference to twisting the horse's tail.

## 22 Horse and Rider

Carchemish, southern Turkey

Neo-Hittite/Assyrian, 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE

Terra cotta

L: 10.8 cm, W: 5.7 cm, H: 13.5 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 105006

This terra cotta horse figurine has a squat body with short, thick legs, an erect mane and a bobbed or tied tail. The eyes of the man and horse are applied dots and the horse's bridle is represented by placing coils over its muzzle. It also has flattened coils wrapping around the forelimbs just below the breast, and there is a short segment of a coil above the dock of the tail. The man is wearing a helmet, headdress or elaborate hairstyle and is positioned in a forward seat, holding the horse's neck. He has an inscribed stamp on one arm.





### 23 Bronze Bit

Sarkislar, Turkey  
Hittite, 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
Mouthpiece L: 29.5 cm  
Cheekpiece W: 15.4 cm  
Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin  
VA 15667

This bronze bit, with a jointed mouthpiece, was found in a hoard with two other bits, including the one below. The cheekpieces are trapezoidal.



### 25 Horse Head Handle

Cappadocia, Turkey  
Hittite, second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE  
Terra cotta  
L: 8.0 cm, W: 6.0 cm, H: 8.9 cm  
Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin  
VA 3511

This tiny horse's head was once part of a handle of a vessel. The mane appears to be plaited and two circles on the shoulders may represent phalerae.



### 26 Horse Head

Anatolia, Turkey  
Hittite, second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE  
Terra cotta  
L: 7.8 cm, W: 4.2 cm, H: 6.1 cm  
Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin  
VA 3512

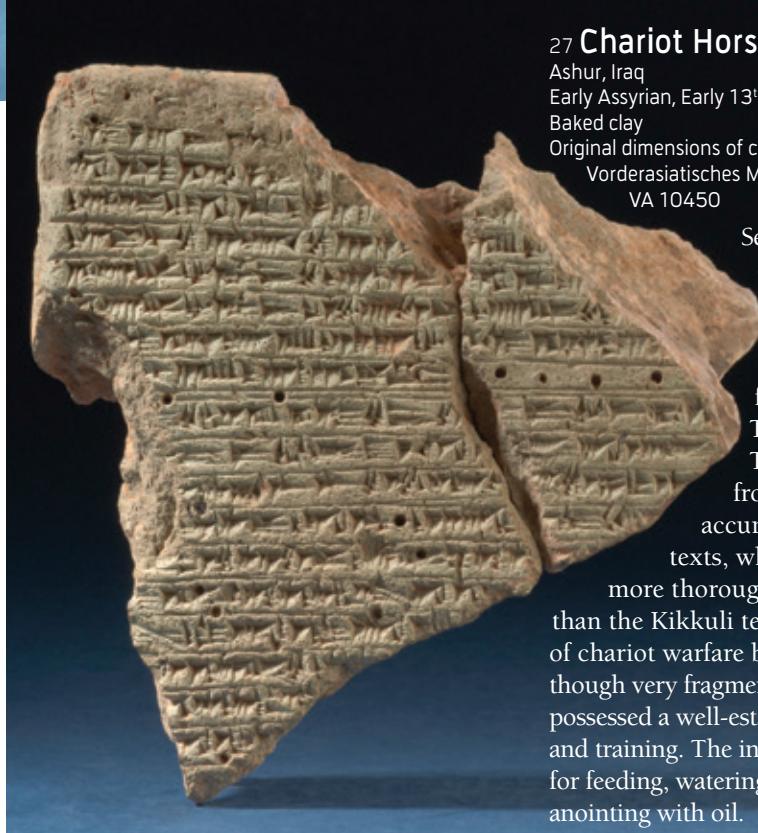
This horse head is a fragment that was once attached to the body of a whole horse. Traces of pigment indicate the horse was wearing a bridle. The muzzle is quite gracile and the neck relatively thick and arched.



### 24 Bronze Bit

Sarkislar, Turkey  
Hittite, 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
Mouthpiece L: 25.6 cm  
Cheekpiece W: 10.3 cm  
Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin  
VA 15664

This bronze bit was found in a hoard with two other bits, including the one above. It has a single bar mouthpiece and wheel-shaped cheekpieces.



### 27 Chariot Horse Training Text from Ashur

Ashur, Iraq  
Early Assyrian, Early 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Baked clay  
Original dimensions of complete tablet: H: 28 cm, W: 35 cm  
Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin  
VA 10450

Several contemporaneous and later equine texts have been discovered, including Hurrian and Kassite ones and some from Ugarit. Here we see an example from a series of tablets found at Ashur, the Assyrian capital. These are later than the Kikkuli Tablets and may be an outgrowth from them that incorporate their own accumulated knowledge. The Assyrian texts, which are more uniform in language, more thorough, and more colorfully written than the Kikkuli texts, emphasize the replacement of chariot warfare by the cavalry. This particular text, though very fragmentary, indicates that the Assyrians possessed a well-established tradition of horse breeding and training. The instructions given include a schedule for feeding, watering, harnessing, exercising, resting and anointing with oil.

## 28 Chamfron

Anatolia, Turkey  
Urartian, Late 9<sup>th</sup>-Early 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 24.8 cm, W: 17 cm (top) 7.5 cm  
(bottom)  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
89.4

This tapered chamfron has two registers separated by a border and decorated by embossing and incising. Both depict a winged male figure holding a mythic animal up in each hand. This iconography is referred to as the “Master of the Animals,” which on its simplest level symbolizes the power of humans over beasts. However, it also has a broader message of the successful dominance of the god or ruler over other men. The animal has the body and horns of a gazelle, the beak of a raptor, and a long tail. At the lower register the male figure holds two felids. The Urartians also made T-shaped chamfrons.



## 29 Blinker

Anatolia, Turkey  
Urartian, 8th-7th century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 19 cm, H: 9.5 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
89.5

The blinker shown here is for the right side of the horse's head. It is decorated with embossed and incised figures of a male sphinx shooting a female sphinx with an arrow. Both are winged, with the head of a human, wings of a bird, and body of a felid. The male is bearded, helmeted, and also has a human arm and torso. The female's hairstyle consists of two pigtails. Four small eyelets on the margins were designed to receive bronze rings for attaching a leather

backing; one of the rings is still in place. Three similar blinkers in the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston, appear to match this one, indicating that there were two horses in the original team for which the blinkers were made. If this is the case, the pairing of horses suggests the blinkers were worn by chariot horses, rather than ones ridden by cavalry.

## 30 Yoke Standard

Anatolia, Turkey  
Urartian, Late 9<sup>th</sup>-Early 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze, embossed and incised  
H: 60 cm, W: 27 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
88.214

This impressive standard would have been mounted on the yoke of what must have been a very ornately decorated chariot, and is one of a pair. The Urartians frequently decorated every part



## 31 Breastplate for Chariot Horse

Anatolia, Turkey  
Urartian, Late 9<sup>th</sup>-Early 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 34 cm, W: 40 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
89.7

Breastplates were worn by chariot horses to protect them from wounds from the enemy's projectiles. This one is hammered from a single piece of metal and finely incised with a scene that has a central figure of a four-winged god, attended by a human ruler and a winged genius. To the sides are sphinxes and hunters shooting at ibexes or goats. The scene is bordered, and there are small perforations along all the edges to attach a leather backing to prevent chafing of the horse's skin. Many similar examples of Urartian horse breastplates have been discovered.



### 32 Horse's Helmet

Northwest Iran  
Urartian, 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE or  
Sasanian, 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE  
Bronze  
L: 29.5 cm, W: 19 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135437

This helmet, designed to be worn by a horse for protection in battle, was made from a single large piece of hammered sheet metal. It has a central ridge and holes cut to accommodate the horse's ears. It was apparently originally padded, as indicated by holes around the edge for attaching a cloth lining. Several others are known from northwest Iran, none from controlled excavations, so the date is uncertain. There are also no known depictions to aid in assigning a cultural affiliation. All are without ornamentation and seem to have been fitted for small ponies. When a replica of this helmet was tried on living animals, allowing for the lining, it best fit a stallion that stood just 1.07 m at the withers. Since chariot horses at that time were smaller than cavalry mounts this equine protective gear may have been for a small chariot pony.

### 33 Bridle, Breastplate and Bells

Hasanlu, Iran  
Hasanlu IV, 1100-800 BCE  
Copper or Bronze  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
UP 73-5-315, 545, 547, 548, 552a,b,  
553, 554, 555

Hasanlu has yielded some of the most complete sets of bridles from the Near East, owing in large part to the discovery

tines. All the original leather straps were destroyed in the fire or disintegrated through the centuries. This ornate bridle has bronze beads that were originally strung along the straps, as well as a pair of unusual tapered, bowed cheek strap covers. The rondels at the center of the brow band



of stables and tack rooms destroyed in a conflagration around 800 BCE. The bridle shown here was found in the portico of Burned Building IV-East, lying next to the skeleton of a man, who was apparently carrying it plus another, plainer, bridle made of iron and antler

and at the strap crossings were added from another bridle found at Hasanlu. The mouthpieces at Hasanlu are jointed snaffles, usually separate from the cheekpieces, but attached by running the ends of the mouthpiece through perforations in each cheekpiece.

The bronze bells shown here are examples of large numbers found at Hasanlu. They vary in size, but all were associated with horse gear. It is not clear exactly how they were worn. The deep, lunate breastplate was found in a group with others in Burned Building IV-V. Similar ones are frequently depicted on chariot horses in Assyrian bas-reliefs. The beads of the necklace are made of glazed frit. Similar horse gear was depicted in Assyrian bas-reliefs at Nimrud, Iraq, and on fragmentary ivory plaques from Hasanlu.

### 34 Jointed Mouthpiece of an Early Snaffle Bit

Hasanlu, Iran  
Hasanlu IV, 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 17.3 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
65.163.60

This jointed mouthpiece was made by looping together two strong rods of bronze and twisting the ends like rope with a loop for the reins and headstall straps at the far ends. Jointed mouthpieces for snaffle bits first appear in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, looking very like modern ones. The appearance of these early mouthpieces suggests that there could have been more perishable precursors made of rope or rawhide that never survived, however, the twisting was also an easy way to make the loops and join the two bronze pieces to each other. This example was found in the Citadel, in Burned Building II, level IV, at Hasanlu.



### 35 Head of a Pin with Winged Equid

Surkh Dum, Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Ivory  
L: 5.5 cm, H: 2.8 cm, Th: 9 mm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
43.102.26

This recumbent figure, detailed by fine incising, probably represents a winged horse. The head is disproportionately small, but the animal is wearing a neck collar. Circle and dot motifs can be found in the eye position, on the neck and the flank. A "sun" design appears on both thighs. The wing is decorated with a zigzag, and hatched patterns appear on the wing and across the belly of the beast. The ivory equid was originally joined to a circular metal backing. Similar pins with recumbent animals have been found in other parts of Luristan, as well as at Hasanlu, in northwest Iran.

### 36 Equid-Shaped Cheekpiece

probably Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 15.1 cm, H: 9.1 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
58.30.7

This highly stylized bronze left cheekpiece has a long-necked equid with the mane indicated by five hair tufts and prominent ears. The horse's body is a trapezoid with a center hole for the mouthpiece. The reverse of the body has four spikes, one in each corner.

### 37 Bit with Horse-Figured Cheekpieces

Western Iran  
Iron Age 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 13 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
57.51.40 a-c

This bit is a snaffle with a single-piece bar mouthpiece with the ends curled to prevent the cheekpieces from slipping off. The cheekpieces are large, elaborate horse figures with two



loops on their backs to receive the leather straps. The horses share some characteristics with Arabian horses, including clean throatlatches, large nostrils, large eyes, and high tail docks.

### 38 Horse and Rider-Shaped Cheekpiece

Northwest Iran  
Iron Age, Early 1st millennium BCE  
Bronze  
L: 11.7 cm, W: 11.7 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1979.352.2

This figured cheekpiece is cast in the round and has a standing stallion with a rider holding a twisted rope rein. The horse has a large eye, a projecting forelock and prominent mane. The man has a large nose, is wearing a tall helmet or headdress and holds the reins in one hand. There is a center hole to receive the mouthpiece and loops on the top of the horse's head and over the croup to take the leather straps of the headstall. The probable mate to this cheekpiece is in the British Museum (see next entry).



### 39 Horse and Rider-Shaped Cheekpiece

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 11.7 cm, H: 11.8 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 134927

This right cheekpiece depicting a stallion and rider is quite similar to the previous cheekpiece from the opposite side and is probably its mate. They do clearly represent the same style and probably have a similar origin. The man is seated in the middle of the horse's back with a rope rein in his right hand. He is wearing a helmet or headdress. The horse is large compared to the size of the man's body and has a large eye, a thick neck, robust legs, and a long tail with a high dock. Like the other example, there is a center hole to receive the mouthpiece and loops on the top of the horse's head and over the croup to take the straps of the headstall.



### 41 Wheel-Shaped Cheekpiece with Feline Figures

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
Dia. 6.5 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
30.38.38

This cheekpiece represents a seven-spoked wheel with two crouching felines clinging to its rim.



### 42 Bit with Bar Mouthpiece and Rectangular Cheekpieces

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 10 cm, W: 6.5 cm, D: 3 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
30.38.14

This is a harsh-looking bit with a straight bar mouthpiece and rectangular openwork cheekpieces with six sharp spikes on their inner surfaces. The spikes put pressure on the animal's cheeks enabling the person with the reins to control direction by inflicting pain or discomfort on one side or the other.



### 43 Bit with Equid-Shaped Cheekpieces and Bar Mouthpiece

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 8 cm, W: 16.5 cm, D: 9.5 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
31.14.1

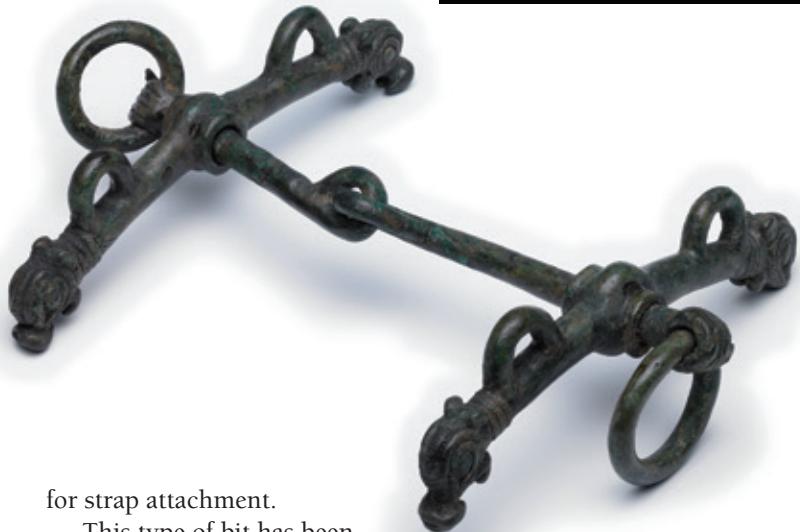
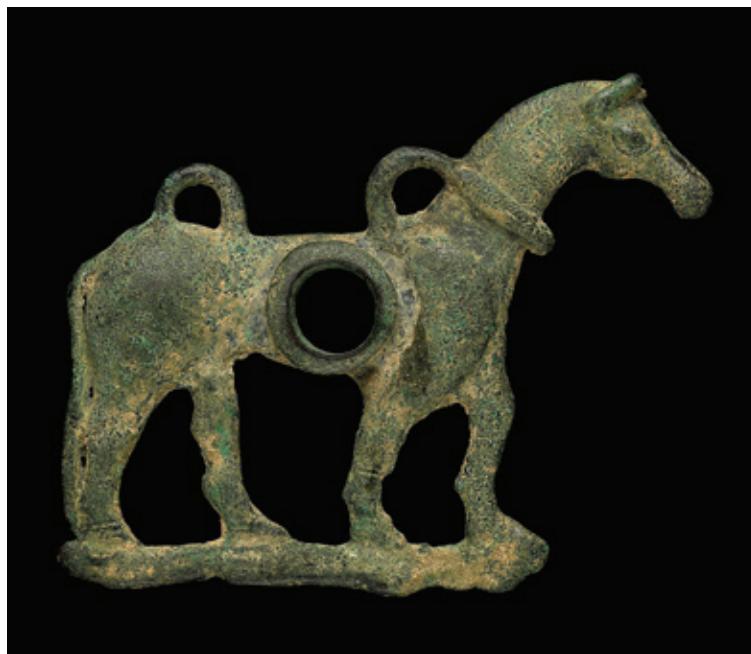
This bit has a straight bar mouthpiece that terminates in curled ends. The cheekpieces are equids with large ears, erect manes, but forelocks, usually only present on horses, making it difficult to determine if they are asses or horses. The tail seems to have long hairs from the top to the end, more like a horse than an ass. The equid is wearing a neck collar.



#### 44 Bit with Figured Felid Heads and Human Hands

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 21.5 cm, W: 16.8 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 130675

This bit is an early example of a snaffle with a jointed mouthpiece. Made with the lost-wax casting method, the ends of the mouthpiece are shaped like human hands wrapped around the large, circular rein rings. The bar-shaped cheekpieces have terminals shaped like lion heads and two D-shaped loops



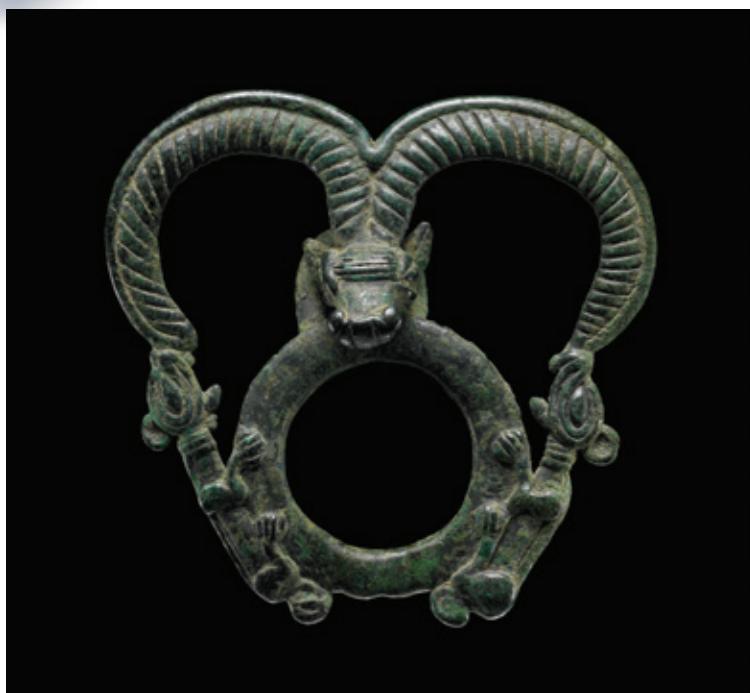
for strap attachment.

This type of bit has been found in Assyria, Media and central Iran from about the 9th century BCE onward, but the animal-head motif is characteristic of the Luristan region. The jointed bit improved the rider's control over the horse, because even slight pressure on the reins caused the bit to move in the horse's mouth.

#### 45 Horse-Shaped Cheekpiece

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 11.8 cm, H: 9.5 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135973

This right cheekpiece shows a horse with a narrow muzzle, ears in a forward position, and a long tail. The horse's harness has a neck collar.



#### 46 Horse Pendant

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 10th-6th century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 5.49 cm, W: 6.35 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 128775

This small pendant is a stylized horse with a thick neck, trimmed mane, upright forelock, thick legs and high tail dock. The neck has a collar or ornamentation represented by three rows of rounded knobs.

#### 47 Harness Ring with Mouflon Head Flanked by Stalking Felids

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 8.6 cm, W: 8.8 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135978

This harness ring is well executed with the mouflon's mouth wrapped over the central ring and the two felines gripping it with fore and hind paws. The mouflon's horns form most of the outer two rings, with the felids locking onto the tips of the mouflon's horns with their mouths to complete the circles.



#### 48 Goat-Shaped Cheekpiece

Luristan, western Iran  
Iron Age, 9<sup>th</sup>-7th century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 9.91 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 123273

This cheekpiece is designed to resemble a goat, with curved horns, a body in profile, and face partially turned to the side. It was made with lost-wax casting. The inner surface has spikes to apply pressure on the horse's cheeks. A circular opening in the center of the body would have received one end of the mouthpiece. Strap loops are mounted above the rump and behind the neck.

#### 49 Bit with Sphinx Cheekpieces

Luristan, Iran  
Iron Age, circa 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 16 cm (of cheekpieces), W: 12.5 cm (interior, between cheekpieces), H: 18.5 cm (of cheekpieces)  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 130677

This bit has elaborate cheekpieces made with the lost-wax casting method in the form of a mythological creature with an animal's body (perhaps a felid), a human head, bull's horns, and wings. The human head has hair curled up on both sides, and there is a collar around the neck. The solid bar mouthpiece was manufactured by hammering, then twisted at the ends in opposite directions. A pair of loops on the upper inner surface of each cheekpiece served to attach the bit to the headstall. A single low spike on the inside of each, just above the hind legs either helped secure a leather lining or aided in control by putting pressure on the horse's cheeks. Four slight projections on the lower edge of the base bar, opposite each of the hooves, may have also held a leather lining in place.



#### 50 Stone Relief of a Hunting Scene

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Gypsum  
L: 77.80 cm, W: 20.70 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135742

Excavated in the North West Palace Room W1, in the Assyrian city of Nimrud, this fragment of a larger bas-relief shows a bearded man riding or leading two horses with a wounded lion out in front of the team represented by traces of its head and claw. This panel was found in the palace of the famous Assyrian king, Ashurnasir-pal II, by archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam in 1852.





### 51 Wall Panel of Groom and Chariot Horse Team

Khorsabad, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, reign of Sargon II (721-705 BCE)

Modern plaster cast of the original gypsum relief

W: 168.0, H: 122.0 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 118828

This cast, a relief that was part of a larger panel in a room or corridor of the palace at Dur-Sharrukin, shows a royal groom holding the reins of a pair of horses. Dur-Sharrukin, which means *Citadel of Sargon*, was built by the Assyrian king Sargon II, northeast of Nineveh, and abandoned after his death. The scenes in the palace have been interpreted as depicting the arrival of tribute horses in order to emphasize the power of the emperor. The attendant shown here, therefore, was probably not an Assyrian, since the panel was part of a series showing tribute being brought to King Sargon II from Syria or Turkey. The hairstyles and costumes of the grooms seen in these bas-reliefs indicate that they were probably Medians. The Assyrians highly valued the Median horses.

The realistic carving shows minute details of the man's helmet, beard, and hair, as well as the horses' tack. The bits have curved, tapered cheekpieces. The cheek and nose straps are decorated with rosettes similar to metal ones found on harnesses at Nimrud, and feathered crescents are attached to the tops of their headstalls. They are wearing a padded cushion over their brows and the reins appear to be braided rawhide or leather. Around the horses' necks are ornamented necklaces with tassels dangling in front, and they are wearing neck collars.



### 52 Stone Wall Panel Relief of Horse Heads

Khorasbad, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, Reign of Sargon II (721-705 BCE)

Limestone

H: 39 cm, W: 36 cm, Th 10 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 118833

This portion of a wall panel relief of a scene of horses, depicts a horse's head in a harness being led by a person's hand. The horse's headstall has a padded brow cushion, strap separators that resemble flowers, and a crest that probably had feathers and was attached to the poll strap. The cheekpiece is a curved rod.



### 53 Relief Fragment of Chariot Horse with Harness

Khorsabad, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, Reign of Sargon II (721-705 BCE)  
Limestone  
H: 45.7 cm, W: 33 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 118831

This fragment of a larger carved stone wall panel relief of a scene of horses shows a horse's head in an elaborate harness. The horse has a straight profile and appears to be champing at the bit. The bridle cheek strap has a series of medallions and a plume, the poll strap appears to have a brow cushion, and the neck collar is tasseled. The mane is trimmed so that the outer parts flow downward, but the centerline stands erect. An ornate crest rises up and curves at the top of the horse's neck.

Extensive amounts of the original pigments, identified as red ochre and Egyptian blue, survive on the surface, although much is only identifiable through the use of a special technique called visible-induced luminescence imaging as the blue is not visible to the naked eye. This recently-developed technique shows for the first time that the color scheme chosen by the Neo-Assyrian artists decorating this palace of Sargon was identical to that used on contemporaneous wall paintings elsewhere. The creator may have been inspired by direct contact with Egyptian art, where there was a much longer history of using "Egyptian blue."



### 54 Bas-relief of an Elamite Horse and Cavalryman

Nineveh, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, reign of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE)  
19th century plaster cast of original stone  
W: 57.2 cm, H: 43.2 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 124790

This fragment of a larger wall panel relief, also from the South West palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, depicts an Elamite cavalryman riding a stallion at a full gallop. The reins, which the rider holds in his left hand, have a weighted tassel in front that would have aided in controlling the horse when the rider was shooting his bow and needed his hands free. The bridle cheekpiece is a curved rod, and the horse's mane is clipped. The horse is wearing a breast strap, possibly for the rider to grip when necessary. The man is wearing a headband and a belt.

### 55 Bas-relief of a Neo-Assyrian Archer on Horseback

Nineveh, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, reign of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE)  
19th century plaster cast of original stone  
W: 57.2 cm, H: 43.2 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 124791

This bas-relief from the South West Palace of King Sennacherib, at Nineveh, depicts an Assyrian cavalryman discharging his arrow while on a galloping stallion. The man has a conical helmet and a beard and is riding in a forward position. The horse has a collar weighted with a tassel that guides the horse so the rider can have both hands free for shooting arrows.





56 Fragment of Wall Panel with Chariot Team

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE)  
Gypsum  
H: 55 cm, W: 72 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135741

This fragment of a larger wall panel relief was found in the North West Palace, Room WI at Nimrud. The room was lined with wall reliefs, some with the king, priests, and guardian spirits, as well as hunting scenes. This portion of a panel features the heads and breasts of three horses drawing a chariot. The driver's hand, just at the left edge of the piece, is holding

a whip. The horses all have very straight facial profiles and strong arched necks. A tasseled martingale, a collar decorated with plaques, the bit, bridle reins, and a crest at the base of the neck are all readily visible. A small blinker is attached directly to the headstall and may have also acted as a strap separator.

57 Ivory Carving with Horse, Chariot, and Rider

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, circa 9<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Ivory  
H: 6.2 cm, L: 11.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 132939

The Assyrians acquired large amounts of ivory through tribute and war booty, so they were able to convert it into some of the finest ancient carvings in the world. Although the plain ivory appears very beautiful to our modern eyes, it was originally covered with gold leaf and colored inlays. Nimrud has produced many of these exquisite pieces now found in major museums.

This charming object is done in the “Northern Syrian” style, which harkens back to the time of the Hurrians and Hittites. The man has large, almond-shaped eyes, a small nose and chin, and a pageboy hairstyle, and he is wearing a short kilt. The horse has many Arabian attributes, including a concave facial profile, a strong, vertical neck, and arching tail. The chariot originally had six spokes and was drawn by a yoke pole. A quiver is fastened to the side of the chariot. The horse has a circular, tasseled medallion hanging from its breast band, perhaps to serve as both ornamentation and to dissuade flies.





### 58 Cavalryman Crossing a Mountain Stream

Nineveh, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, reign of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE)  
Gypsum  
H: 59.3 cm, W: 65.8 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art 32.143.18

Found in the South West Palace of Sennacherib, at Nineveh, this is a fragment of a larger bas-relief panel that depicts cavalrymen in full battle armor dismounted to cross rough terrain next to a stream. This slab and a large fragment in the British Museum were part of the same scene.



### 59 Decorative Boss

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Shell  
L: 9 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art 54.117.14

This shell was found in Room NN, in the North West Palace, in a group of 18 recovered from a deep well. Originally, they were fixed to a wooden backing by a nail. Some scholars have suggested they were castanets, decorations for wooden surfaces, or horse trappings. Because some of the examples bear the name of a king of Hama, in western Syria, they may have been imported into Nimrud.



### 60 Decorative Boss

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Shell, silver  
Dia: 5 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art 54.117.15

This shell is a second example from the group of 18 bosses found in the North West Palace (see Cat. #59).



### 61 Ornament or Button

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Shell  
L: 1.9 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art 54.117.16

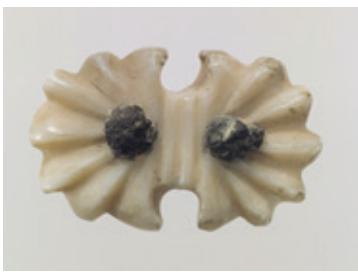
This tiny carved shell button or ornament was found with two others in the North West Palace, in the deep well in Room NN.



### 62 Ornament or Button

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Shell  
L: 2.2 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art 54.117.17

This carved shell button or ornament was found with the ones above and below in the North West Palace, in the deep well in Room NN.



### 63 Ornament or Button

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Shell, silver  
L: 3.18 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
54.117.19

This carved shell button or ornament was found with the two above in the North West Palace, in the deep well in Room NN.

### 64 Inlay of Horse and Rider

Probably Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze, traces of gold  
L: 11.7 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1988.8

This realistic depiction of a man riding one of a pair of horses on a thin bronze inlay probably dates to the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE). The rider is seated in the middle of the horse's back, with his left hand on his hip and his right holding the reins up. He is bearded and wears a helmet or headdress and a tunic, but is barefoot. The horses have clipped manes, but full tails, are fairly gracile, but have strong necks. The inlay has holes pierced in four places around the edges in order to attach the piece to another material.



### 65 Horse Blinker

Nimrud, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Stone  
L: 11.4 cm, H: 6.8 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
62.269.12

This carved stone blinker was made for the horse's right eye and was finely carved and perforated around the edges to be attached to another material, perhaps a leather backing. It has a pointed eminence in the center of the outer surface.



### 66 Clay Tablet Fragment

Nineveh, northern Iraq  
Neo-Assyrian, 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Clay  
L: 5.7 cm, W: 5.7 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
K.8197

This tablet, excavated by Sir Austen Henry Layard, was part of the collection of cuneiform tablets referred to as the Library of King Ashurbanipal (ca. 668-630 BCE). They were excavated at several locations on the mound, but form a group considered to be the remains of the



great library collected by Ashurbanipal. The library includes scientific and administrative texts, as well as royal inscriptions. This clay tablet has 16 lines of cuneiform inscription.



### **67 Cylinder Seal with Lion Attacking a Horseman**

Southwest Iran

Neo-Elamite II, circa 743-646 BCE

Chalcedony, with modern resin impression

L: 3.5 cm, Dia: 1.4 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 89009

This amazingly detailed blue-gray chalcedony cylinder seal depicts a confrontation between a horseman and a lion and also has a brief inscription. The horseman is wearing a peaked hat with a tie or flap hanging behind. He is either bare-chested or is wearing a tight-fitting tunic, as well as a belt, baggy trousers and leggings or soft boots. A scabbard, secured by a cord around his shoulder, hangs at his waist. He is riding bareback, holding the reins close to the neck of the horse and hurling a spear at the vicious lion while his mount leaps forward. The horse has a slender frame with a long neck, full mane and short forelock. The tail is tied spirally at the upper end, but hangs loose below. Two tassels hanging under the horse's belly may indicate a saddle blanket. The lion is standing on its hind legs with its forelegs extended, claws spread and jaws open to show its fangs and tongue. There are six rows of inscription inserted beside the design, separated by horizontal strokes. Written in cuneiform script, but Elamite language, the seal says: "Akka, son of Pira-atishna," which must be the name of its original owner.



### **68 Clay Tablet with Cuneiform List of Equid Terms**

Sippar, east bank of Euphrates River, southern Iraq

Late Babylonian, 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE

Clay

L: 6.35 cm, W: 7.62 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 93080

This clay tablet fragment was found along with tens of thousands of other tablets dating to the Late Babylonian period at Sippar, an ancient Sumerian and later Babylonian city just 60 km north of Babylon. The text of this tablet consists of a lexical list of equids.

### **69 Clay Tablet with a Cuneiform Receipt for a Gift Horse**

Sippar, east bank of Euphrates River, southern Iraq

Late Babylonian, during reign of Darius I, Achaemenid Dynasty, 516 BCE

Clay

L: 5.1 cm, W: 3.5 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 56781

This complete clay tablet, written in cuneiform, is a Late Babylonian receipt for a horse given to the Ebabbar temple in Sippar. It was written during the reign of Darius I, when Iraq was part of the Achaemenid empire.



### 70 Horse and Rider with Chair-Backed Saddle

Nippur, Iraq  
Seleucid, 312-63 BCE  
Terra cotta  
L: 10.5 cm, W: 4.5 cm, H: 13 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 15480

This terra cotta horse and rider can be dated to the Seleucid period based on the flat hat or helmet the cavalryman is wearing. His nose is pinched and his form is crudely made. The man sits in the donkey seat, over the animal's rump, with his legs positioned so that his feet would project forward. He is seated on a curious saddle with a prominent pommel that he is grasping and a high cantle resembling a chair back. This type of saddle would have secured the man and prevented him from easily falling off in combat. Much of the horse is reconstructed.

### 71 Horse and Rider

Nippur, Iraq  
Seleucid, 312-63 BCE  
Terra cotta  
L: 11 cm, W: 3.5 cm, H: 12 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 15486

This small figurine depicts a horse with a thick, arched neck with its nose in a tucked position. A hole at the muzzle may have received a bit of a perishable material, now missing. A chain-like design, made by impressing small circles in a sequence in the soft clay, wraps around the muzzle and the neck, representing a bridle. A similar design runs in front of the rider's leg and down the horse's leg. The rider is positioned in the forward seat, grasping the horse's neck. The anterior half of the horse and the man's legs are original, but the rest is reconstructed.



### 72 Horse and Rider

Kish, southern Iraq  
Late Babylonian/Achaemenid, 600-330 BCE  
Pink clay core, cream slip  
W: 8.3 cm, H: 10 cm  
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford  
AN1925.150

This hand-modeled figurine of a man mounted on a horse was found at the Sumerian city of Kish. The horse's head has an upright mane falling forward onto the brow. The rider is abstractly depicted with a pinched head, seated astride fairly far forward, with his arms holding the horse's neck. A "side-arm" is represented on the left side by applying an L-shaped piece of clay that is curled at the top. The left foreleg and right rear leg are missing.



### 73 Lid with Resting Bactrian Camel

Dilbat, Iraq  
Hellenistic, Achaemenid or Parthian,  
4th-1st century BCE  
Gray slate  
L: 7.1 cm, W: 8.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 120433

This decorated slate object was probably the lid of a small rectangular box. It is incised with the design of a bird of prey standing between the humps of a recumbent Bactrian camel. The camel's hairy neck is indicated by short incised dashes. The border consists of crosshatched incisions

on the top and bottom, with a row of tongue-like motifs on the right and left. A circular hole is perforated through the central top border. The top left corner is missing.

Dilbat was an ancient Sumerian city located southeast of Babylon on the bank of the Euphrates. It was founded around 2700 BCE, but this piece is from a much later period. The lid was discovered by Hormuzd Rassam, the famous Mesopotamian archaeologist, who was born in Mosul in 1826.



### 74 Amphora with Horse Head Handles

Southwest Iran  
Achaemenid, 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Silver  
H: 16.5 cm, W: 15.5 cm (with handles), Dia: 9.1 cm  
Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin  
VA Xlc 4327

This elegant Persian amphora has realistic horse head effigies on both handles. Both handles were hollow, but one doubled as a spout. The body of the vessel is fluted. Similar vessels are shown on Achaemenid reliefs at Persepolis.



### 75 Relief of Heavily Armored Horseman (Cataphract) on Plaque

Iraq  
Late Seleucid or Early Parthian, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE  
Baked clay  
H: 15.2 cm, W: 19 cm, Th: 2.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 91908

This flat, perforated plaque illustrates a cataphract on horseback in low molded relief. The cavalryman, who is wearing a "coal skuttle" helmet and scale or lamellar armor, is sitting in the middle of the horse's back, holding a spear, as he prepares to attack a lion. It is unusual to find a depiction of a man in armor in a hunting, rather than battle, scene. The two small perforations may have been to attach the plaque to a wooden coffin.

## 76 Bas-relief of Groom Guiding Horse

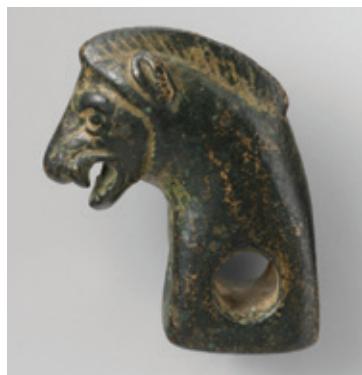
Persepolis, southern Iran  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Early 19th century plaster cast of limestone relief  
W: 66 cm, H: 26.5 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
1827,0501.14

This partial cast taken from a stone relief at Persepolis shows the torso of a groom who is walking alongside a horse, guiding by the reins. The horse is a heavy, ram-headed individual with a thick muzzle and neck,

probably from the Nisean breed. The mane has been neatly trimmed except near the withers. The rosettes on the headstall and other details of the bridle's construction are clearly depicted.

The piece was molded from

a bas-relief panel belonging to Delegation 19, representing the Skudrians, which formed part of the top register of the west wing of the north face of the Apadana. The mold was made on site at Persepolis during the 1820s, probably soon after the original was discovered, and is an important record of a piece that no longer survives. The cast was presented to the British Museum as early as 1827.



## 77 Boar's Head Harness Strap Divider

Iran  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
H: 3.5 cm, W: 3 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
52.119.9

This harness fitting is in the form of a boar's head. Boar imagery appears frequently on fittings from this time. Strap dividers were typically used in sets of four, attached to the headstall in order to keep the straps in proper alignment and separated. They are depicted at Persepolis on the horses of both the Persians and their tributaries.



## 78 Harness Strap Divider

Iran  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 3.2 cm, Th: 1.5 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
56.81.54

This strap divider resembles a boar's tusk or possibly the claw of a raptor or carnivore. Imitation boar's tusks were very commonly used.



## 79 Harness Strap Divider

Provenience unknown  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Copper alloy  
L: 3.3 cm, Th: 1.8 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
1999,1201.17

Another strap divider in the shape of a boar's tusk, this piece is square in section and tapers to a point. The base is hollow and is pierced on four sides with interconnecting holes to receive the straps of the headstall.



## 80 Harness Strap Divider with Grooves

Iran  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Bronze  
L: 4.1 cm, Th: 1.8 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
56.81.55

This strap dividers also resembles a boar's tusk, or possibly the claw of a raptor or carnivore, but is embellished with transverse incised lines.



### 81 Gold Horse from the Oxus Treasure Chariot Model

Takht-i Kuwad, Tajikistan  
Achaemenid, 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Gold  
L: 4.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 123909

This is the single surviving horse associated with a gold chariot model from the Oxus Treasure, a hoard of 180 gold and silver items found between 1876-1880 on the north bank of the Oxus river, (now known as the Amu Darya), in modern Tajikistan.

Based on the two draft poles and pair of two-horse yokes on the chariot, there must have been three more horses in the original team. The existing horse has a gold wire headstall that includes a diamond-shaped frontlet attached to two upper and two lower rings that may represent phalerae. The horse is ram-headed, like the Nisean breed depicted at Persepolis. Its posture is suggestive of a pulling motion.

The horse was formed by soldering together two hammered plates, leaving the body hollow, but the legs are

solid. The headstall and reins are added in wire, with circles at the junctures. A lozenge-shaped setting indicates the crossing of the straps on the head. The forelock is depicted as an upswept plume.

A second, better preserved gold chariot model with a full team of four horses was also included in the Oxus Treasure. The Oxus Treasure comes from a site that was part of the eastern Achaemenid province of Bactria. Other eastern Achaemenid provinces in Central Asia include Sogdiana, Parthia, Chorasmia, Aria, and Scythia, all of which were occupied by Iranian tribes. Bactria was a significant source of gold that was exploited by the Persians.



### 82 Cylinder Seal Fragment with an Archer on Horseback

Southwest Asia  
Achaemenid (Mixed, Greco-Persian), circa 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Pale blue Chalcedony (with modern impression)  
H: 2.6 cm, Dia: 1.4 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 89816

This tiny chalcedony cylinder seal has a finely detailed depiction of an archer firing a "Parthian Shot" over the haunches of his horse at a leaping lion (or lion-pawed monster) with his double recurved bow. The rider is wearing Median dress consisting of a peaked hood, a jacket and baggy trousers. The top of his quiver can be seen behind his waist. He is seated on a tasseled saddlecloth that is secured by a breast strap. The horse has a heavy build, thick neck and is ram-headed, like the Nisean breed used by the Medes and Persians, rather than the more gracile Greek horses with straight facial profiles. The mane appears as a crest and the tail seems to be knotted. Only half the seal is original, so all but the nose and forepaws of the lion is missing.

### 83 Rider on Horse

Possibly Egypt  
Achaemenid, 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Cast bronze  
L: 10.1 cm, H: 8.5 cm, Th: 1.7 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 117760

The rider in this cast bronze statuette is wearing riding clothes with a soft cap and a short sword suspended from a waist belt on his right thigh. His tunic has edge decoration and he is wearing bracelets. He is riding in a forward seat with hands on the reins and knees in a slightly flexed position.

The horse has a large head, and a thick muzzle with a convex facial profile, like the Nisean breed. The mane is mostly erect, but has long strands draped over the lower neck, and the forelock is tied up into a circular crest on the poll, all of which are distinctively Achaemenid features. The tail is in a mud-knot. The horse has a rectangular saddle blanket with edging tufts along the lower edge and stepped lappets at the rear. There is a strap below the blanket, to secure either it or a pad-saddle, and a breast strap. The horse is shown in a skidding position, and the pairs of fore and hind hooves are joined together for attachment to an element now missing (perhaps a vessel).





#### 84 Stone Relief Fragment of Groom Escorting a Horse

Persepolis, southern Iran  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Limestone  
W: 25 cm, H: 45 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 118842

This partial relief comes from a section of wall panel showing Delegation IX on the Northern Staircase East Wing (top register) of the Apadana, at Persepolis. This shows the Cappadocians bringing tribute to the Persian king Darius. The fragment shown here depicts a bearded groom, wearing a Median-style cap, long-sleeved coat or tunic, and a plain, annular earring. The groom, who has the horse's reins in his right hand, appears to be escorting the beast. The horse has a thick, arched neck and a mane that is long at the base of the neck and either clipped or brushed over to the opposite side for the upper two-thirds. If it is depicting the same scene as another complete panel, then the horse is an example of the heavily-built Nisean breed.



#### 86 Stone Relief Fragment Showing a Chariot Horse in Harness

Persepolis, southern Iran  
Achaemenid, 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Limestone  
W: 18 cm, H: 17.5 cm, Th 10 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 118851

This figurine of a horse and rider was found in House 1, Room 39 at Site NH, in the southeast part of Ur. The houses archaeologist Leonard Woolley uncovered in this area were originally built in the Neo-Babylonian period, probably in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and continued to be occupied under the Achaemenid

Persian ruler. It is tentatively dated to the Achaemenid period, as Woolley himself thought. Ur was abandoned in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

With its blue glaze, now bleached almost white, the horse has a rounded conformation and an erect mane. The rider is sitting far forward, clutching the horse's neck, and may be wearing a helmet or hood. One of the horse's legs is missing.

#### 85 Glazed Horse and Rider

Ur, southern Iraq  
Achaemenid, 539-end of 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
Glazed baked clay  
L: 6.5 cm, W: 3 cm, H: 7.5 cm  
University of Pennsylvania  
Museum of Anthropology and  
Archaeology  
35-1-114 FN U20055





### **87 Horse and Rider Wearing Helmet**

Nippur, southern Iraq  
Parthian, 247 BCE-228 CE  
Terra cotta  
L: 8.5 cm, W: 3.5 cm, H: 13 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 15473

The rider on this figurine has a detailed and lifelike face with a large nose, eyebrows, small lips, and beard. He is wearing a hood or helmet and is seated far forward, gripping the horse with his hands high on its neck. The horse is stylized with thick legs and a forelock.

### **88 Horse and Rider**

Nippur, southern Iraq  
Parthian, 247 BCE-228 CE  
Terra cotta  
L: 8.5 cm, W: 3.5 cm, H: 14 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 15474

This stylized figurine has a rider in the forward seat, grasping the horse high on its neck. The man's face and hood or helmet are simply depicted by pinching the clay. The horse has a long, upright neck, erect mane and forelock.

### **89 Saddled Horse**

Nippur, southern Iraq  
Parthian, 247 BCE-228 CE  
Terra cotta  
L: 11 cm, W: 4.5 cm, H: 11 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 12242

This fragmentary horse figurine has a saddle with a cantle that sweeps up fairly high to provide a more secure seat for the separately modeled rider. The saddle is placed squarely in the middle of the horse's back.

### **90 Horse and Rider**

Nippur, southern Iraq  
Parthian, mid 2nd century BCE-3rd century CE  
Terra cotta  
L: 9.5 cm, W: 4 cm, H: 11 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology  
B 2625B

This highly stylized figurine depicts a rider in a forward seat, gripping the horse's neck. The rider's helmet and facial features are indicated in profile by three projections. The horse has an erect mane and thick, arched neck.

### **91 Horse and Rider Figurine**

Nineveh, Iraq  
Parthian, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE  
Terra cotta  
L: 11.8 cm, H: 15.9 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 1856,0903.122

This realistic molded figurine of horse and rider was found in the center of a mound at Nineveh. The man is wearing a helmet and long-sleeved tunic, with fabric draped over his left shoulder and flying behind him. He appears to also have leggings or soft boots with a round emblem on the calf. His right hand is lifted into the air, although it is not clear if he is waving or meant to be holding a weapon. He is seated in the middle of the horse's back, possibly on a saddlecloth. The stallion has a strong, arched neck, a full mane, and a long tail with a high carriage. Its left forelimb is lifted and there is a round disc on its right shoulder that may be a phalera.





### 92 Terra Cotta Horse

Babylon, Iraq

Late Babylonian/Parthian

Terra cotta

L: 11.3 cm, W: 3.8 cm, H: 9.3 cm

Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin

VA 3822

Found in the residential area of Merkes, in the city of Babylon, this hollow-bodied horse figurine still has traces of lime wash and red pigment on its body. The color treatment provides a clue to its age, and there is abundant evidence for occupation at this time in this part of the city of Babylon. It has a thick, arched neck; a trimmed, erect mane; and a tail with a high dock.



### 93 Horse and Rider Figurine

Parthian/Seleucid, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE

Terra cotta

L: 10.5 cm, W: 4.5 cm, H: 8.9 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 113178

This figurine shows a realistically rendered rider on a horse. The man, shown *en face*, is wearing a helmet or headdress, cloak, a belted tunic, and leggings or boots. His right hand is on the croup of the horse. No saddlecloth or girth strap is visible. The horse has a concave profile with large eyes and forehead, thick neck, clipped mane and a luxuriant, flowing tail with a high carriage. In many ways this horse has features suggestive of an Arabian type.

### 94 Plaque of an Archer on Horseback

Babylonia, Iraq

Parthian, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century

Fired clay

H: 7 cm, L: 9.4 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum

BM 1882,0323.5129

This plaque depicts a cavalryman with his arm poised as if pulling a bow, while seated in the middle of the horse's back. The man's face and arm and the horse's body are realistically modeled and proportioned. Extensive areas of the original white pigment ground are still intact and visible traces of red and pink decoration survive.

### 95 Plaque of Saddled Horse in Scale Armor

Probably southern Iraq  
Parthian/Early Sasanian, circa 3<sup>rd</sup> century  
Terra cotta  
L: 7.8 cm, H: 4.4 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 134643

On this plaque, a short-limbed galloping horse is wearing a scale armor trapper and saddle very similar to actual horse armor excavated at Dura Europos, in Syria. Cataphracts, or heavy cavalry, in which the men and the horses were covered with scale armor, were employed by many armies beginning as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The most notable were the Seleucids, Parthians, Romans, and Sasanians. This piece was made by pressing wet clay into a mold.

### 96 Boy Rider

Babylon, Iraq  
Parthian/Seleucid 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE  
Terra cotta, painted  
H: 19.5 cm, W: 10.1 cm, Th: 3.2 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 1880,1112.1956

This figurine of a young boy has his legs spread far apart, with their inner surfaces smoothed so that he could be set astride a model horse. His hands are resting on his thighs. The boy is wearing a three-pointed hat, a short-sleeved tunic, with diagonal front closing, and trousers. His jewelry consists of button earrings, a heavy torque around the neck, and bracelet on each wrist. The piece was made from a two-piece mold and a lump of plaster adhering to his crotch was to attach the figure onto the horse's back after firing. There are remnants of thick lime wash, as well as pink and black stripes on the tunic and sleeves, and black lines on the borders of the sleeves, on the hair, around the eyes and on the bracelets.



### 97 Belt Buckle with Bearded Cavalryman

Syria or Iraq  
Parthian, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century  
Cast leaded copper alloy  
W: 7.2 cm, H: 7.1 cm, Th: 7 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 139205

Decorative belt buckles showing various scenes were

popular during the Parthian period. This one shows a horse in profile, but the rider *en face*, wearing a short sword with a ring pommel on his right thigh. His hair is bunched under a conical ridged cap or 'spangenhelm' helmet. The diagonal line behind the rider may indicate an arrow quiver.



The left hand is raised and the right rests on the croup of the horse. Circles on the chest and rear flank of the horse represent phalerae. There are knobs projecting to the right and left of the buckle.



### 98 Belt Buckle with Cavalryman on Horseback

Iran  
Parthian 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE  
Cast leaded copper alloy  
W: 8.2 cm, H: 8.2 cm, Th: 1 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 1992,0125.1

This belt buckle depicts a warrior on horseback wearing a four-lobed scabbard on his left thigh containing a short sword with a ring pommel. The bearded man's wavy hair is bunched in back in Parthian style beneath a cap or 'spangenhelm' helmet, and he is clothed in a belted tunic and leggings or tight trousers, typical of Parthian clothing. His right arm is raised in front, and the left is on his waist. A circle on the horse's chest may indicate a phalera. A bridle is depicted on the horse's head and the reins are pulled taut. There is a projecting knob on the right side, a projecting heart-shaped hook on the left, and five circular hollows around the border.



### 99 Horse Head Handle

Unknown Provenience  
Parthian or Ptolemaic, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE  
Bone  
L: 9.8 cm, W: 2.7 cm, Th: 1.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135718

This horse head handle, carved in bone, is hollowed out and pierced with two small holes, one through the nose and one at the base. The mane is long and flowing and a bridle is depicted on the horse's muzzle. There are similar objects known from Roman Egypt, suggesting that this is Ptolemaic, rather than Parthian.



### 100 Bridled Horse

Nippur, southern Iraq  
Sasanian, 224-651 CE  
Terra cotta  
L: W: H:  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of  
Anthropology and Archaeology  
B 15487

This fragmentary terra cotta horse figurine is depicted with a bridle on the animal's head and an ornamental phalera on its neck. The head and neck are

authentic and the saddle, body and legs are reconstructed. It would originally have had a detachable rider. Terra cotta horse and rider figures were popular throughout much of the Middle East from the early

first millennium BCE onwards and continued to a dominant artifact in the Sasanian period from Iraq to Central Asia. The reason for their popularity is uncertain, however, they were probably not simply toys.



### 101 Horse and Lancer Engraved on Oyster Shell

Possibly Iraq  
Parthian or Early Sasanian, circa 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE  
Oyster shell  
H: 13.1 cm, W: 13.7 cm, Th: 1.5 cm max.  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 1996,1001.1

This oyster shell container is decorated on the inside by means of drilling lines of small, closely-spaced dots to form a design of a horse and bearded cavalryman in profile. The bearded horseman wears a cuirass and headdress with flying streamers attached. He is charging while holding a long lance. The horse has an upright ornament on its harness and balloon streamers, which are a feature of Sasanian art. Among the luxury goods possessed and traded by the Sasanians were pearls, so the decorating of oyster shell as an art form is not surprising.

### 102 Jasper Stamp Seal with Winged Horse

Provenience unknown  
Early Sasanian, 4<sup>th</sup> century  
Jasper  
L: 1.9 cm, W: 1.6 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 119564

This Sasanian domed stamp seal shows an intricately carved winged horse (Pegasus) walking to the left. The inscription was written in Pahlavi, a script used by various Middle Iranian languages, including Parthian and Middle Persian in the Western Family.



### 103 Silver Plate Showing Royal Hunt

India or Afghanistan

Late Sasanian, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century

Gilded silver

Dia. 27.6 cm, H: 4.5-5 cm

The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 124092

This hammered silver plate with a foot ring depicts a king hunting lions. It is often thought to be King Varahran V, who reigned 420-438 BCE. The king, whose hunting prowess was legendary, is shown holding a lion cub in his left hand while fighting off a lion and lioness, the cub's parents, with his sword in the other hand. One of the lions is already wounded, while the king is in the act of slashing the second. In addition to his

crown, he is wearing a torc around his neck, a short, belted tunic, and trousers or leggings. A decorated box quiver is attached to his belt on the right side, but he has discarded his bow. The horse is fitted with a bridle and saddle blanket, attached with a crupper. Tasseled balloon streamers, apparently attached to the crupper or saddle blanket, float off to the rear. The decoration on the bridle, the balloons, the pommel-less double-edged sword, and the absence of stirrups all coincide with the assignment of this piece to the Sasanian period.

The decoration was made by engraving and chasing, and

extensive areas of the design were spot gilded, including the crown, chest-girdle, belt, parts of the quiver, vertical trouser folds, horse harness, the horse's hooves and tail, balloon fittings, and the lions' bodies. There is no centering mark on the underside, nor are there traces of an inscription indicating previous ownership, value or weight.

The rider's crown is beribboned and crenellated, with a crescent on either side and surmounted by a bun of hair, which does not exactly match that of Varahran V, or any other Sasanian ruler, each of whom adopted an individual crown on their accession to the throne and which are carefully



### 104 Pair of Full-Cheek Cheekpieces

Unknown Provenience

Visigothic, circa 7<sup>th</sup> century

Iron and silver

L: 18 cm

Furusiyia Art Foundation

R-000371

An early design, full-cheek cheekpieces are long rods that extend upward and downward in a straight line to prevent the bit from sliding through the mouth. They also press on the cheeks and thereby provide considerable lateral guidance. The disadvantages of this type of cheekpiece are that it can snag on something and jab the horse's cheek unless a bit guard is used. These are similar to the cheekpieces on a modern Fulmer or Australian snaffle bit, but differ in not having a separate loose ring.

depicted on their coin portraits. Although at least some of these rulers are known to have had more than one crown type, it is more likely that this plate is a later attempt to glorify the hunting exploits of Sasanian monarchy rather than being a specific portrait: the successful hunt became a metaphor for royal *khwarnah* (glory and good fortune), and this extended to the owners of the plate. As such, this object has been regarded as provincial Sasanian production of the 5th, 6th or 7th century. The relatively sketchy manner in which the design was executed supports this interpretation.



### 105 Chariot Workshop Scene

Luxor, West Bank, Upper Egypt  
Thutmose IV's reign, circa 1400-1390 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom  
Facsimile Artist: Nina de Garis Daives (1881-1965)  
Tempera on paper  
W: 69 cm, H: 50 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
30.4.150  
Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.150)

The facsimile shown here replicates a scene on a wall in the tomb of Hapu (TT 66) that depicts carpenters and leather craftsmen in their workshop. The upper register depicts a man on the left making an arrow quiver. The other two men are wheelwrights, making four-spoked chariot wheels. Above them hang a quiver and another broader leather bag. The lower register shows a man on the left working on an unfinished chariot that is on a stand and lacks its wheels. The second man is making another object, probably in leather. Its template is above him. The back of a seated third man is just visible on the far right.

### 106 Offerings of a Chariot and Horse

Luxor, West Bank, Upper Egypt  
Amenhotep II's reign, circa 1427-1400 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom  
Facsimile Artist: Charles K. Wilkinson (1897-1986)  
Tempera on paper  
W: 40.5 cm, H: 33 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.39)

Artist Wilkinson has produced a facsimile of a scene from the tomb of Userhat (TT 56) in which two grooms are bringing an offering of a chariot and a horse. The horse is being led behind the chariot by the reins held in the hand of the man in front, while the man behind the horse helps. The horse has many

Arabian features, including a concave facial profile, an arched neck, short body, and high tail carriage. The chariot has an arrow quiver attached to the box and the wheels appear to have only four spokes.

### 107 Gazelle and Hare Hunting by Chariot

Luxor, West Bank, Upper Egypt  
Amenhotep II's reign, circa 1427-1400 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom  
Facsimile Artist: Charles K. Wilkinson (1897-1986)  
Tempera on paper  
W: 127 cm, H: 74 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.42)

The facsimile of another tomb painting from Userhat's tomb

shown here depicts him in a light chariot, pulled by a pair of horses (the second horse is simply outlined behind the other), hunting hares and gazelles. The man has his bow drawn, poised to shoot. Several of the animals have already been shot with arrows. Most are fleeing, but a couple of the gazelles are facing the horse. The horse has both fore and hind limbs fully extended, a common way of depicting horses in motion in Egyptian art. The horse has a light build, an arched neck and a high tail carriage, much like modern Arabian horses. The chariot wheels have four spokes.





### 108 Axe with Horse and Rider Cut-Out in Blade

Egypt  
Dynasty 18, circa 1300 BCE  
Bronze, wood and leather  
L: 43 cm, W: 16.5 cm (blade), H: 4 cm (haft)  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 36766

This axe, complete with its well-preserved wooden handle and black leather haft wrapping, has a scene pictured in the blade as an engraved cut-out. It is thought to be the oldest portrayal of riding in Egypt, and although it has been suggested that it represents the Asian goddess Astarte, often depicted on horseback, the sex of the rider cannot be discerned.

This technique of cutting out figures and engraving details on them has many examples in New Kingdom Egypt. The figures are different on each side, with one clearly riding bareback and sidesaddle.

### 109 Scarab of Thutmose I in Chariot

Egypt  
Dynasty 19, 1292-1190 BCE, New Kingdom  
Green jasper  
L: 1.5 cm, W: 1.1 cm, Th: 7.5 mm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 17774

This scarab, dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, portrays 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Pharaoh Thutmose I (reign 1525-1512 BCE) shooting an arrow into the breast of a fallen enemy, from his chariot. The scarab, which represents the sun god Re, is important, because it is a retrospective of a previous pharaoh, dynasty and period. An inscription gives the pharaoh's name, identifying the figure in the chariot. Thutmose I engaged in many successful campaigns in Nubia to gain control over its gold mines and to contain the Nubians, but this shows a standard battling chaos scene.

AA  
HE  
QE



### 110 Jasper Ring Bezel Engraved with Amenhotep II's Name and a Horse

Egypt  
Amenhotep II's reign, circa 1427-1400 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom  
Jasper  
L: 1.8 cm, W: 1.3 cm, H: 5.7 mm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 4077

This finely engraved yellow jasper ring bezel has inscribed on one side the prenomen of Amenhotep II, the hieroglyphs *men-ib* = "steadfast of heart," and a representation of a bull. On the other side, the bezel is inscribed with hieroglyphs that include the name of Amun and the words *aa* = "great," *hem* = "majesty," and *qenef* = "he is strong." Also on this side, the bezel is decorated with a delicate engraving of a horse that looks very similar to an Arabian type.

### **111 Chariot Scene on Faience Plaque**

Egypt

Thutmose IV's reign, 1400-1390 BCE,

Dynasty 18, New Kingdom

Faience, black paint

L: 15.6 cm, H: 8.3 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917

(17.194.2297)

This faience plaque shows an often-repeated scene of a man standing in a chariot with a team of two stallions in the unnatural flying leap position with both fore and hind limbs extended. The vines and bush surrounding the chariot are very prominent.

The plaque was once inlaid into a box that held rolls of papyrus.



## 112 Stone Relief of Horses Harnessed to a Chariot

Tell el-Amarna (probably), or Hermopolis (possibly), Middle Egypt  
Akhenaten's reign, 1353-1336 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom  
Limestone, paint

L: 22.9 cm, W: 52.1 cm, Th: 3.8 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Gift of Norbert Schimmel, 1985 (1985.328.18)

Numerous representations of horse-drawn chariots are included in the official scenes at Amarna. Both the king and queen have been shown driving themselves in an accelerated speed to the Great Temple, with their subjects racing behind. On this fragment, however, the pair of horses seems to be at rest. The artist has depicted the instant one horse scratches its leg. This capturing of a moment in time, though not exclusive to the art of Amarna, probably would not have appeared in a ceremonial context in any other period of Egyptian history.



## 113 Whip Handle in the Shape of a Stallion

Egypt  
Amenhotep III's reign, 1390-1352 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom

Ivory, garnet, paint

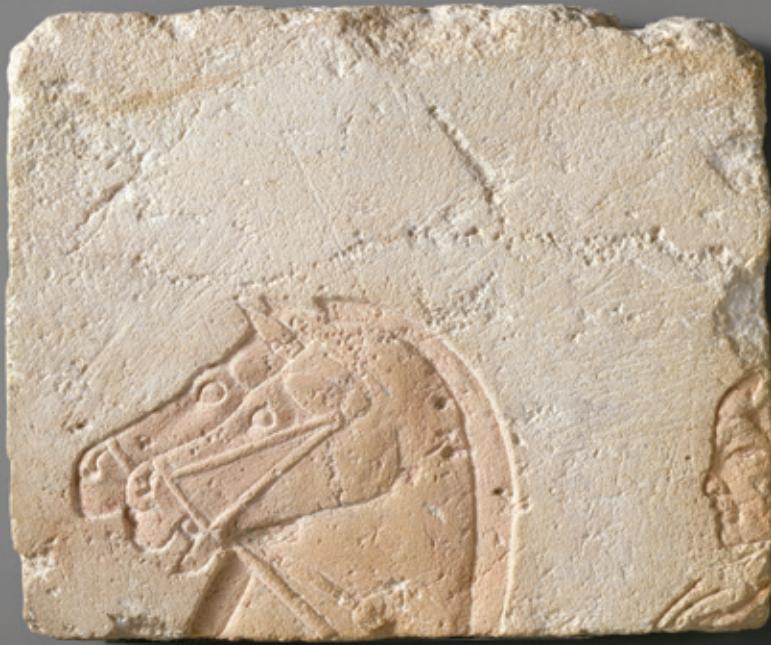
L: 14.6 cm, H: 5.5 cm, Th: 1.8 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1293)

During the New Kingdom, the horse became a familiar sight, and there were many depictions of it in art, particularly during the Amarna period. This small ivory handle of a light whip or flywhisk is carved in the form of a stallion stained reddish brown with a black mane. The eyes, one of which has fallen out, were inlaid with garnet. Its fore and hind limbs are shown fully extended, a common pose to depict motion. The lively carving of this piece, especially the gracefully arched back, typifies the ability of Egyptian artists to evoke the essential qualities of animals. It also exemplifies the fine quality attained in the decorative arts during the reign of Amenhotep III.





### 114 Heads of a Team of Two Horses and a Charioteer

Tell el-Amarna (probably), Upper Egypt, or Hermopolis (possibly), Middle Egypt  
Akhenaten's reign, 1353-1336 BCE, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom  
Limestone, paint  
W: 26.7 cm, H: 22.2 cm, Th 3.8 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Gift of Norbert Schimmel, 1985  
(1985.328.20)

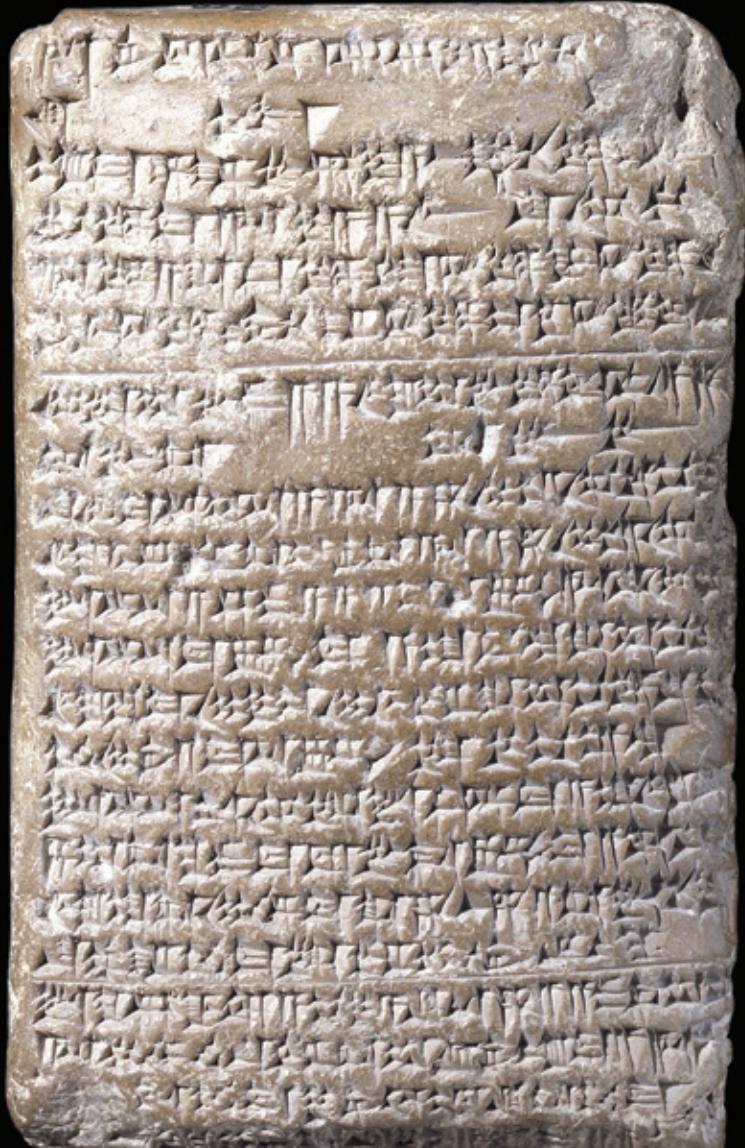
Throughout Egyptian history, artists took great care in depicting animals, a tradition that was continued and expanded during the Amarna period. Although only their heads are preserved, it is evident that the pair of horses is being reined in. Their ears are pricked forward, suggesting the alertness of spirited animals excited by the activity around them. Because of his proximity to the horses' heads, the man just visible at the right edge of the relief must be either driving another chariot or, more likely, walking or standing beside the horses. Perhaps he was attending them as a groom.

The horses' heads show concave facial profiles and the manes are clipped to stand erect. They wear bridles with widely separated cheek straps attached to either end of long bar cheekpieces. It is estimated that as many as

### 115 Amarna Letter

Tell el-Amarna, Upper Egypt  
New Kingdom, Dynasty 18 and Middle Babylonian, 1353-1336 BCE  
Clay tablet  
L: 11.4 cm, W: 7.2 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 29785

The Amarna letters, of which there are around 380 examples preserved, constitute an archive of correspondence generally written in Akkadian cuneiform on clay tablets. Mostly they consist of diplomatic communications from various Asiatic leaders to Amenhotep III and his son Akhenaten, with a few addressed to Tutankhamun. A handful of others are literary or educational works. Spanning a period of fewer than 30 years, these tablets provide information on the relations between Egypt and Babylonia, Assyria, the Mitanni, the Hitties, Syria, Canaan, and Alashiya (Cyprus). The Amarna letters were housed in the capital's center in a building that was called the Bureau of Correspondence of Pharaoh. Bricks from the construction were labeled as such. The archive was discovered in 1887 by a local village woman who was digging ancient mud-brick to be used as fertilizer.



150-200 of the tablets were lost, destroyed, or sold to collectors soon after the archive was opened.

This particular letter to Akhenaten from Burna-Burriash II, the King of the Kassites in Babylonia (reign 1359-1333 BCE), announces the sending of gifts of lapis lazuli and horses to the pharaoh. In exchange, he requests gold from Akhenaten. The horse was a significant import from Asia since its first arrival in Egypt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In a standard greeting format between kings, Burna-Burriash begins by mentioning that his house,

horses, chariots and land are well and hopes the same is true for Akhenaten.

Early in his reign, relations between Burna-Burriash II and Akhenaten were cordial and even included plans for a marriage alliance. As time passed, the association weakened considerably, especially when the Assyrian king Ashur-Uballit I was received in Akhenaten's court. Burna-Burriash took personal offence, since he regarded the Assyrians as his vassals. Eventually, Assyria gained great power and threatened the Kassite kingdom's northern border.



### 116 Comb with a Horse Effigy

Egypt

Possibly Ramesses II's reign, 1295-1186 BCE, Dynasty 19, New Kingdom

Ivory

W: 3.6 cm, H: 3.3 cm, Th: 3 mm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1290)

This finely made ivory comb from the Ramesside period shows a horse with head stooped to feed from a container. Its mane is flowing and its tail long.

the Great, he was the third pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty and is often considered to have been one of the most powerful king of Egypt. His reign of 66 years provided him ample time for his many accomplishments, including the construction of several temples and monuments. The Battle of Qadesh dominates his military history, but he engaged in numerous campaigns in Asia and Nubia to reclaim territories lost by his predecessors.



### 117 Scarab with Ramesses II Driving a Chariot

Egypt

Ramesses II's reign, 1279-1213 BCE, Dynasty 19, New Kingdom

Glazed steatite

L: 2.5 cm, W: 1.9 cm, H: 1.3 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.215)

On the base of this scarab, Ramesses II is shown driving a chariot. His prenomen "Usermaatre-Setepenre, Beloved of Amun" is written above the scene. Also known as Ramesses

could serve as the artist's practice canvas, since they were plentiful and free. Here the artist has depicted a candid image of a horse in a very natural pose.

This piece was found in the tomb of Nesnakhtu (TT 312), who held office under the first Saite king, Psamtik I, of

Dynasty 26. His titles include: Overseer of Priests of Amun-Re, King of Gods; Overseer of Upper Egypt; Overseer of the City; and Vizier, proving that he was quite influential in his time. His tomb was located in the Asasif necropolis, a narrow plain east of Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri.

### 118 Egyptian Artist's Sketch of a Horse

Luxor, West Bank, Upper Egypt

Psamtik I's reign, 664-610 BCE, Saite, Dynasty 26, Late Period, Tomb date:

656-650 BCE

Limestone and paint

W: 22.2 cm, H: 13 cm, Th: 10.8 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.3.33)

Before committing to the final product, such as a relief on a tomb wall, Egyptian artists often sketched preliminary versions of their designs. Small pieces of scrap limestone





### 119 Whip Handle in the Form of a Horse

Egypt  
Dynasty 25-29, Late Period, 525-380 BCE  
Faience

L: 7.9 cm, W: 1.6 cm, H: 1.1 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1011)

This faience whip handle depicts a rather short and stout horse with mouth open, forelimbs tucked and hind limbs fully extended. The horse is wearing a bridle, a neck collar, and a decorated saddle blanket held in place by a girth strap. Given the relatively large size of the head in proportion to the body, the horse's trunk and legs may be foreshortened in order to fit the size of the handle. The rounded belly and haunches and tucked forelimbs also make the grip more comfortable for the hand.



### 120 Breast Ornament for Horse

El Kurru, Sudan  
Nubian, Napatan Period, reign of Shabaka, 716-702 BCE  
Faience  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
21.10560

This ornate breast ornament of blue-green faience is composed of Hathor heads, jasmine blossom pendants, ball beads and cartouches strung in a net pattern. It was found at el-Kurru, where the horses of the Nubian kings were interred adjacent to their owners' pyramids. Horse grave Ku 201 produced this beautiful adornment, along with other fine decorations. A large collection of Nubian horse trappings were excavated from the equine burials at el-Kurru by Harvard Egyptologist George Andrew Reisner between 1916-23.

### 121 Lamp with Horse Head Handle

Ballana, Egypt  
Roman, 50-150 CE  
Bronze  
L: 17.5 cm, H: 11 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 66576

This elegant bronze lamp has an elongated body and long, fluked nozzle with a rounded tip, and circular wick hole. The top is sunken, with a raised edge and flat rim around the body and nozzle. The filling hole is shaped like an ivy leaf, with an engraved stem. At the rear is a handle with a stem of angular D-shaped section, curving forward to a serrated collar, from which emerges a horse's head and neck.



## 122 Petroglyph of Two Horsemen on a Basalt Boulder

Azraq-Asqwafeh ridge, Jordan  
Bedouin, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century  
Basalt boulder  
W: 36 cm, H: 34 cm, Th: 15 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 122182

The rock art on this basalt boulder was created simply by pecking figures on its smooth, unprepared face, revealing the lighter rock matrix below the natural desert varnish. The figures are filled in with cross-hatching. The scene is of two horsemen, one above the other, and both facing toward a camel with an exaggerated hump. Both riders are sitting in the middle of their horses' backs, with their legs fully extended and hands in

the air. There are three vertical inscriptions written in Safaitic script located (a) above the upper (larger) horseman, (b) between upper horseman and camel, and (c) under the lower (smaller) horseman. Safaitic, an Old North Arabian script, accompanies scenes in rock art in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and northern Saudi Arabia drawn by the local Bedouin nomads. A serpentine line, probably more recent, meanders across the right side of the image. The boulder was found 100 miles east of Askar.

Inscription Translations:  
(a) To Banat, son of Baraqat.  
And Lât!; (b) To Simām, son of Sunay, son of Ha-Malik, son of Harb, this ass; and (c) To Hāni'at, son of Niks, these sketches.



## 123 Camel and Safaitic Writing on Basalt Slab

Qara Qatafi, Jordan  
1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century  
Basalt  
H: 41.5 cm, W: 36 cm, Th: 8 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 120928

This brown basalt boulder has a Safaitic inscription on the right and the roughly incised representation of a camel in the center. It was found at the site of Qara Qatafi, in the Eastern Desert of Jordan. Safaitic is an Old North Arabian dialect that has been found in southern Syria, eastern Jordan, and northwestern Saudi Arabia over a temporal range of 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE-4<sup>th</sup> century CE. The range topics found in such inscriptions is narrow, usually including the Bedouin's name, the name of his camel, and perhaps how much he cares about his camel.





#### 124 Stela of Horse and Rider

Qanawat, Syria  
Roman, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century

Basalt  
W: 44 cm, H: 72 cm, Th: 16 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 135708

This carved stela shows a mounted figure who has braided hair, wears a long, belted tunic and holds a spear and shield. It is carved in high relief on basalt. The horse has his left foreleg raised and his bridle, breast strap and crupper are depicted.



#### 126 Stela Showing a Camel and Two Riders

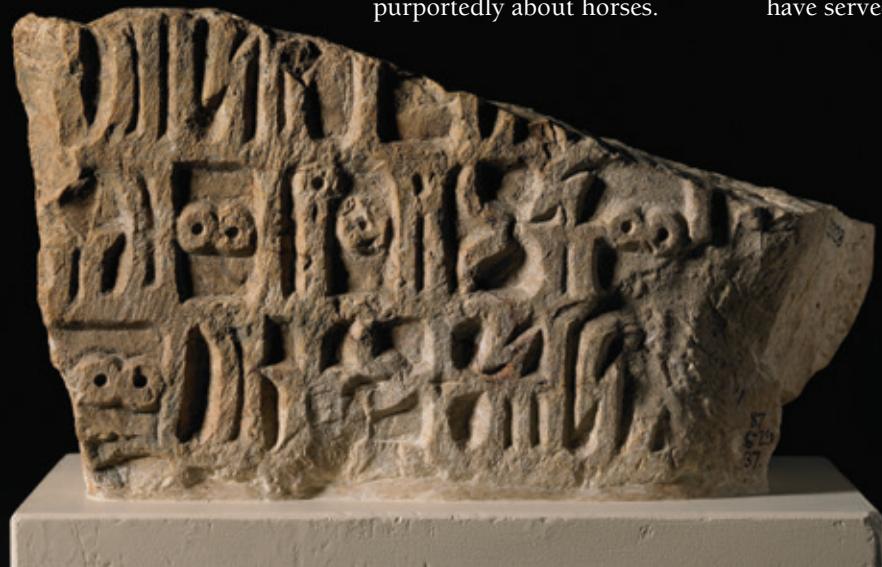
Yemen  
Ancient South Arabian, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century  
Calcite-alabaster  
W: 26 cm, H: 25 cm, Th: 6 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 102601

This fragment from the upper part of a rectangular stela depicts two men riding a camel. The person in front is wearing a kilt and brandishes a sword. The camel is controlled by a rein coming from the camel's nose. The two-line inscription written above the scene in Middle Sabaic script reads: "portrait and monument of Ha'an, son of Dhu-Zu'd." It may have served as a funerary stone.

#### 125 Stela with Engraved Text about Horses

Zafar, Yemen  
Ancient South Arabian, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century  
Limestone  
W: 27 cm, H: 14.8 cm, Th: 9.6 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 125128

This stone slab fragment bears a three-line Sabaic inscription, purportedly about horses.



**127 Incense Burner  
Showing a Man on a  
Camel**

Southern Arabia  
Sabean, 3<sup>rd</sup> century  
Calcite  
W: 15 cm, H: 32 cm, Th: 8 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 125682

This stone incense burner depicts a man riding a camel on the side panel of the incense receptacle. Southern Arabia, known as *Felix Arabica*, was an important region for trade. Among the many items traded were frankincense and myrrh, either of which might have been burned in the receptacle. Camels were more important than horses for transporting goods along the trade routes.



**128 Bronze Donkey with  
Dedicatory Inscription**

Yemen  
Ancient South Arabian, 2<sup>nd</sup> century  
Bronze  
L: 6.3 cm, W: 1.8 cm, H: 7.1 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 132932

This low-tin bronze statuette of a donkey was made using the lost-wax casting method with little tooling afterward. The four lines of inscription in Sabaic script cast into the surface on both sides have not been translated yet. There are minor blowholes arising from the casting.



**129 Seal Bezel of a Man  
Riding a Camel**

Yemen  
Sabaeans, 1000-500 BCE  
Carnelian  
L: 2 cm, W: 1.6 cm, Th: .4 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 120343

This seal has a finely engraved scene of a man riding a dromedary camel. He is holding an object in his right hand that has been variously identified as a whip, camel-stick, torch, or city emblem. In his left hand are the reins of the camel halter. The figure is either wearing an Arabian style "Kuffiyah" headdress or has long hair and has a prominent belt around his waist. The Sabaeans of South Arabia were very active in the spice trade.



**130 Horse and Rider**

Yemen  
Ancient South Arabian  
Copper alloy  
L: 7.8 cm, H: 7.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 125343

This cast figurine, depicting a man riding a horse, was probably a dedicatory statuette that may originally have been set into the top of an inscribed stone. Standing figures of this type are well known from the Hadramawt region of eastern Yemen. The figure is *en face*, while the horse is shown in profile. The horse is wearing a bridle and the rider is holding the reins in his hand.



### 131 Fresco of Horses Fording a Stream

Qaryat al-Fau, south-central Saudi Arabia  
1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century

White gypsum plaster on a clay ground, with red, yellow, orange and black iron oxide pigments

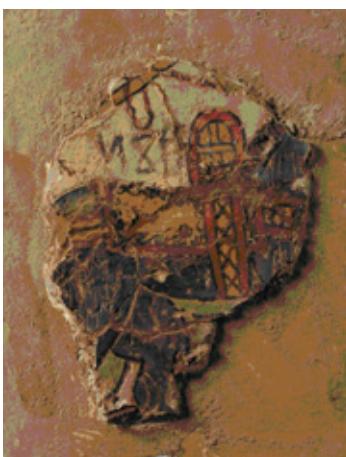
L: 101 cm, H: 44 cm

National Museum of Saudi Arabia  
F6-650

Qaryat al-Fau, an ancient caravan town located at an oasis on the northwest edge of the Rub'al-Khali (Empty Quarter), in southern Saudi Arabia, was first occupied in the second century BCE. Its excavations have provided significant information on the use of the horse in this region. Some frescoes show scenes of hunters on horseback with

long lances chasing camels, as well as inscriptions in the *Musnad* script, a pre-Islamic south Arabian alphabet.

The fresco shown here was found in the great temple, which was dedicated to four deities: the moon god Sin; the sun goddess Shams; Antar, the god of the morning star; and Kahl, the principle deity of the Kinda. This delicate fragment comes from a larger scene of horses crossing a stream and preserves eight of their feet with fish swimming around them. A line of black text runs along the bottom on a red band that may represent the shore. Below the inscription is an orange background with large plant leaves.



### 133 Fresco of Saddled Horse

Qaryat al-Fau, south-central Saudi Arabia  
1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century

White gypsum plaster on a clay ground, with red, yellow, and black iron oxide pigments

W: 24 cm, H: 32.5 cm  
King Saud University Museum  
F7-65

This fragment of a fresco from a building in the ancient town of Qaryat al-Fau preserves the base of the neck, back and flank of a black horse. The saddle or saddle blanket is yellow with a decorative border of black waves trimmed with a red border. A yellow girth strap and possible rounded saddlebow are crosshatched in black and outlined in red. A multi-colored breast strap and crupper, are also depicted. The horse is tethered by rope to a pole suspended above its back. The name Kazim is written above the horse in the *Musnad* script, a pre-Islamic south Arabian alphabet.

### 132 Statue of Dromedary Camel

Hadramawt region, Yemen  
Ancient South Arabian, 2nd-1st century BCE  
Cast copper alloy  
H: 11 cm, L: 4.3 cm  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
BM 102480

This camel figurine from the Hadramawt region of eastern Yemen is depicted with a halter around its neck that ends in a pair of ties hanging down in front. There is an inscription on the right flank with a South Arabian dedication to the god Wadd'ab. The left and right forelimbs are cast as a single unit, as are both hind limbs. There is a triangular impression from casting on the reverse in the center of the hump and another on the front surface just above the forelimbs. A pin projects from the bottom of the front foot. The hind legs are missing.





**134 Rearing Bronze Horse Figurine**

Qaryat al-Fau, south-central Saudi Arabia

circa 200

Bronze

L: 8.7 cm

King Saud University Museum

F16-18

This lifelike figurine of a rearing stallion was discovered in Tomb H. 6, at Qaryat al-Fau. Created in bronze using the lost-wax casting method, it still has traces of gilding around the face and mane. The mane is depicted as cropped and the forelock was possibly bunched into a ball.

**135 Couch Finial with Horse Head**

Qaryat al-Fau, south-central Saudi Arabia

Early 1<sup>st</sup> century

Gilt bronze

L: 24 cm

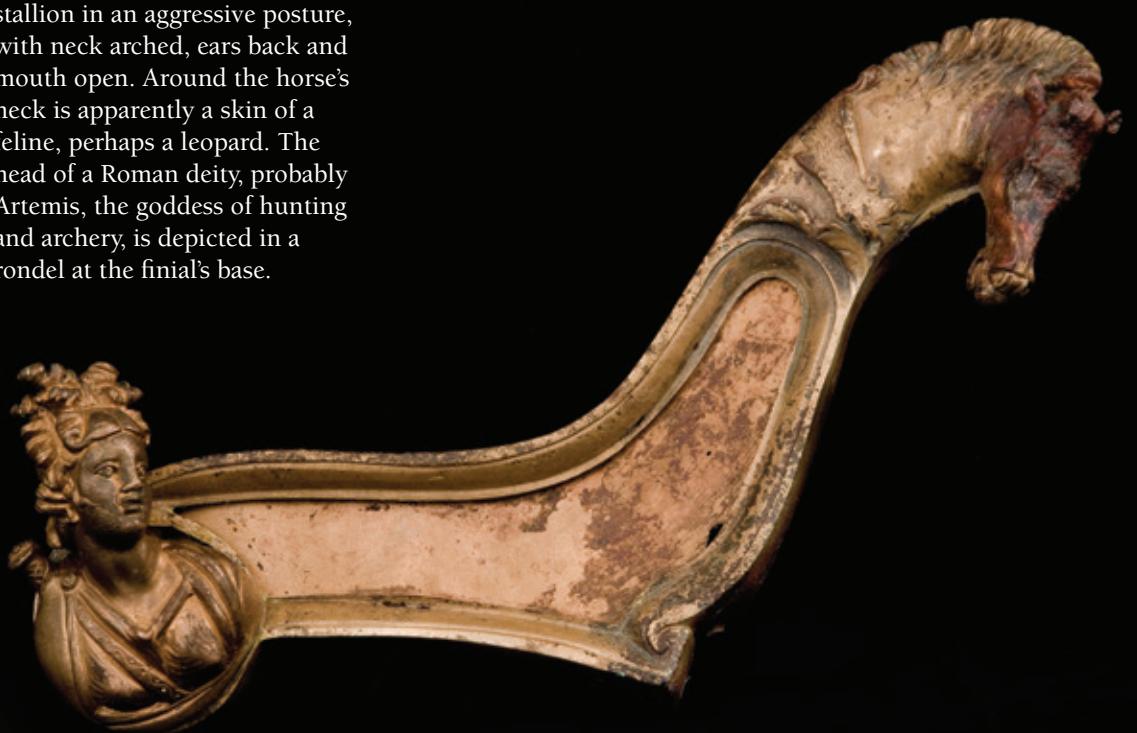
King Saud University Museum

F16-48

This beautiful couch finial was found in the tomb of Sa'd ibn Malik (Tomb K6), at Qaryat al-Fau. The body of Sa'd was found lying on a wooden couch that had legs finished in a series of flattened ovular bronze elements capped at one end with this finial.

Made in bronze overlaid with gilt, the finial was cast in several pieces that were brazed together. The horse's head is very delicate and resembles the Arabian breed. It appears to be a

stallion in an aggressive posture, with neck arched, ears back and mouth open. Around the horse's neck is apparently a skin of a feline, perhaps a leopard. The head of a Roman deity, probably Artemis, the goddess of hunting and archery, is depicted in a rondel at the finial's base.





136 Gold Bridle with Bronze Rings

Mleiha, Sharjah, UAE  
Late Pre-Islamic Period, 150 BCE-200

CE  
Gold, bronze  
Sharjah Archaeological Museum

This gold bridle was found at the site of Mleiha, about 20 km south of al-Dhaid and 50 km from the Sharjah coast.

Mleiha is one of very few known settlements dating to the period between the Iron Age and the Sasanian Empire. The ancient town was a significant trade center, linking Arabia to the cultures around the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans. The site consists of

houses; craft-workshops for iron, bone and stone working; a market district; a cemetery; and a small fortress. Evidence for considerable trade includes Attic black-glazed pottery from Greece, South Arabian alabaster jars with lion effigy handles, and stamped amphorae from Rhodes.

The people of Mleiha buried their deceased in monumental “tower tombs,” with the corpses placed underground with their possessions, including camels, horses, and valuables. The bridle, with one large and four smaller gold medallions on each side and bronze rein rings, was found in the tomb of an important man, along with a sacrificed horse.



137 Horse-Shaped Spout

Mleiha, Sharjah, UAE  
Late Pre-Islamic Period, 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE  
Gilt silver  
L: 3.3 cm, W: 2 cm, H: 4.5 cm  
Sharjah Archaeological Museum

This cast gilt silver spout, representing a rearing horse, was probably once attached to a shallow bowl. The pouring hole is located on the horse's breast. It was found at the site of Mleiha along with another similar one. The high level of craftsmanship in fine metals is clearly witnessed in these objects, but it is not known whether they were made locally or acquired through trade.



### 138 Silver Beaded Headcloth

Saudi Arabia

20th Century

Cotton, linen, silver beads, white beads

L: 188.0 cm, W: 81.3 cm

McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection

001725-31

This women's headcloth, also known as a mantle, is decorated with bands of silver and white beads. It also has rectangular linen patches of contrasting colors along the edges.

### 139 Beaded Dress

Saudi Arabia

20th Century

Cotton, printed cotton fabric, silver, white and colored beads

L: 134.6 cm, W: 53.3 cm

McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection

001725-23

This black cotton dress has an unusual inset yoke of printed red cotton in a floral pattern and is a style typical of the Western Province of Saudi Arabia. The front of the dress has silver and white beads embroidered in a U-shaped pattern common on many Bedouin dresses. Red fabric, white beads, and yellow stitching highlight the shoulders of the dress, and the sleeves and cuffs are embellished with white, blue, red, yellow, and green beads in triangular and diamond patterns. The sides and bottom of the dress are decorated with elaborate embroidery in typical patterns of parallel lines and squares.



### 140 Face Mask

Western Saudi Arabia

20th Century

Cotton, silver beads, white beads, leather and coins

L: 41.9 cm, W: 33.0 cm

McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection

001725-27

This cotton face mask (*burqah*) has a forehead band of silver with bells on the lower edge, and is decorated with silver and white beads alternated with brown stitching. A piece of red cloth is appliquéd in the lower center just below a row of white buttons. Coins of varying sizes are stitched in both the center and sides.





#### 141 Headcord (Iqal)

Syria  
20th Century  
Metal and silk thread  
L: 127.0 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1944  
44.86.4

This *iqal* is typical of a type worn by nobles and tribal leaders during the twentieth century. It consists of light blue silk cord in two strands divided into eight sections that are wound with gold thread around stiff material in two semi-cylindrical parts with gold tinsel between. The end of the *iqal* has light blue cords on slides with blue cord tassels with beads of blue and gold thread at the ends.

#### 142 A Desert Camp

Victor Pierre Huguet

1860

Oil on canvas

H: 38.1 cm, W: 47.0 cm

Orientalist Museum, Doha

In this canvas by French Orientalist Victor Pierre Huguet, we witness the quiet atmosphere of an encampment in a North African desert just before the sun fades away. In the center of the painting, a Bedouin woman converses with a man who appears to be tending the horses, and beside the pair is the traditional container made of goat skin used by the Bedouins for making butter. The horses, although unrestrained, seem content to be near the humans, reflecting the affinity of the desert horses for their masters.

Huguet was strongly influenced by his mentor, Eugène Fromentin, in his passion for horses and the nomadic life. Many of his paintings depict horses in caravans and desert encampments, resting with their riders near an oasis or river, or standing quietly beside ruins or city gates. Huguet's accuracy in portraying these horses indicates that most of them appear to be Barb in origin rather than purebred Arabians.  
FF



#### 143 Koulely - Arabian

Hippolyte Lalaisse

1855, published by Dusacq & Cie., Paris

Chalk lithograph on tinted paper

H: 42.0 cm, W: 51.5 cm

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

This lithograph is a portrait of an Arabian stallion, Kouleley, born in 1839 and sired by Obayan out of Nedjdi. This stallion was imported from the Near East to France in 1850 by Mr. Dupont and Mr. Perrot de Thamberg along with the stallions Bagdadli and Sherif.



#### 144 Friendly Gathering

Andre Pater  
1988  
Oil on canvas  
H: 58.4, W: 71.1 cm  
The Pyramid Society

Andre Pater, a graduate of the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts, is a contemporary painter well known in the genre of sporting art. This painting, evocative of the work of the Orientalist artists of the nineteenth century, is a desert scene depicting a bay Arabian mare outside a tent where a group of Bedouin are gathered. The saddle on the ground behind the mare suggests that she is patiently awaiting her master while he converses with his friends. In addition to their legendary horsemanship skills, the Bedouin were also skilled falconers and Pater includes a falcon on a perch in the foreground of this painting.

#### 145 Silver Belt

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver  
L: 74.3 cm, W: 11.4 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001732-58

This belt is made of webbed-wire mesh lined with eleven sliding low-grade silver pendants. A round silver bead is at the center of each pendant. The lower parts of the pendants are attached to a separate wire mesh chain and are decorated with silver bells (*zarir* or *garasat*) at the bottom. Bells are a common component of Bedouin jewelry and have a long history in the region. Excavations at the pre-Islamic site of Qaryat al-Fau, the capital of the Kindah Kingdom (8<sup>th</sup> century BCE-4<sup>th</sup> century CE) located in central Arabia, yielded jewelry with bells of the same type seen in later Bedouin jewelry.

#### 146 Sandals

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Leather  
L: 27.9 cm, W: 12.1 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001725-121a and b

These leather sandals (*na'a*) are of a distinct style found in the Arabian peninsula that have a separate wrap for the hallux and a diagonal oval-shaped piece as a central part of the upper. Both of the upper leather pieces generally feature decorative elements of embroidered leather or thread in contrasting colors, and these sandals are embellished with green and white leather stitching.





#### 147 Ankle Bracelet

Oman  
20th Century  
Silver  
L: 11.4 cm, W: 11.4 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001732-5

Highly embellished with floral and other motifs, this massive ankle bracelet has a metal closure seam and decorated center pin.



#### 149 Bracelet with Carnelian

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver, carnelian  
L: 9.5 cm, W: 9.5 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001732-16

This silver C-shaped bracelet is decorated with three inset carnelian (*aqiq ahmar*) stones. Red and turquoise are the most common colored stones found in Bedouin jewelry.



#### 150 Money Pouch

Yemen  
20th Century  
Silver  
L: 8.3 cm, W: 7.0 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001732-63

This silver crenellated half-moon shaped money pouch has a hinged door and is decorated with circular and diamond facets.



#### 151 Bracelet

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver  
L: 10.2 cm, W: 10.2 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001732-64

This smoothed and rounded coil bracelet has notched silver incising. It has a diamond facet at the joined ends that is characteristic of Bedouin jewelry.



### 152 Pendant

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver, coral, carnelian  
L: 16.5 cm, W: 8.9 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001732-61

This style of triangular pendant is found frequently in Bedouin jewelry and may be worn as both a necklace and a hair ornament. It has soldered silver wire and diamond facet decorations with bells and hand-shaped charms at the bottom. The pendant is set with a central carnelian and three corals.

### 153 Necklace with Crenellated Pendant

Najd region, Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver, coral, carnelian  
L: 52.1 cm, Pendant: W: 21.6cm, H: 16.5cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001732-49

This necklace has a large, flat, crenellated pendant that is hexagonal in shape. The pendant is decorated with bells at the bottom, and the necklace has silver balls interspersed with coral and carnelian. The pendant dates to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, while the necklace is newer, probably mid-to-late twentieth century. Bedouin jewelry was often “recycled” in this fashion, and older pieces were combined with newer elements.

### 154 Necklace

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver, copper, glass beads  
L: 41.9 cm, W: 9.5 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001732-60

This necklace has hollow copper and low-grade silver balls interspersed with blue and white glass beads. The pendant is hexagonal in shape and is decorated with bells at the bottom.

### 155 Coil Choker Necklace

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver, glass  
L: 16.5 cm, W: 16.5 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001732-62

This choker necklace has large coils at the bottom with two blue glass inset jewels and silver terminals. It is an excellent example of the influence of market economics on traditional Bedouin arts and crafts. While the necklace is a modern piece, it is clearly Bedouin-made, as evidenced by the drilled turquoise and diamond facets.





### 157 Coffee Roasting Pan and Stirrer

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Cast iron  
L: 69.9 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001727-18

This cast-iron coffee roasting pan (*mihmas*) has incised metal decorations on the handle. The stirring stick attached with a chain has the traditional half-moon shaped end.

### 158 Coffee Pots

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Copper, brass  
L: 36.2 cm, W: 31.8 (largest)  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001727-54, 62, 68

Coffee making is an important Bedouin tradition and these three coffee pots (*dallahs*) have the typical hourglass shape with beak-shaped spouts and hollow lids with shaped finials. The two pots on the left have decorative stamped designs and metal charms at the end of the spout.



### 156 Pendants

Hofuf, Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Silver, carnelian  
L: 41.9 cm, W: 9.5 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001732-59 a, b

These pendants are made of crenellated and decorated British coins. They have bells and diamond-shaped charms at the bottom.

### 159 Coffee Box

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Wood, brass  
L: 20.3 cm, W: 11.4 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001728-7

This type of coffee box (*mubarrad*) is used as a tray to cool the hot roasted coffee beans before they are ground. Typical of those found in the Najd region of Saudi Arabia, this tray is a single piece of wood decorated with brass studs and circular round carvings.





### 160 Coffee Bean Bag

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Leather, silver, wool  
L: 61.0 cm, W: 17.8 cm  
McClure Archives and University  
Museum, University of Central Missouri  
Nance Collection  
001730-3

Constructed of leather with a leather drawstring, this coffee bean bag is decorated with silver crimping and leather stitching of contrasting colors. The yellow, orange, and turquoise tassels are arranged in typical fashion at the sides and bottom of the bag.



### 161 Camel Bag

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Goat wool, sheep wool  
L: 61.0 cm, W: 45.7 cm  
McClure Archives and University  
Museum, University of Central Missouri  
Nance Collection  
001731-36

This bag of goat and sheep hair is strip-woven with a slash opening and six tassels. The geometric designs on a white background are typical of the Najd region of Saudi Arabia.



### 162 Camel Bag

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Goat wool, cotton  
L: 85.1 cm, W: 10.6 cm  
McClure Archives and University  
Museum, University of Central Missouri  
Nance Collection  
001731-2

Made of goat hair from a single strip of woven fabric with stripes and geometric shapes, this camel bag has a fringed fold-over flap decorated with printed pink cotton.



### 163 Incense Burner

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Sheet metal, tin, brass, mirror  
L: 69.9 cm  
McClure Archives and University  
Museum, University of Central Missouri  
Nance Collection  
001727-42

Incense is commonly used in Arabian households and is burned over charcoal or wood. This incense burner (*mabkhara*) is of the traditional shape with square base and outward sloping sides. It is decorated with colored metal, brass studs, and mirrors.



### 164 Embroidered Tent Partition

Iraq  
20th Century  
Wool  
L: 152.4 cm, W: 223.5 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001731-20

This hand-stitched and woven textile has allover surface embroidery with geometric and naturalistic patterns.

### 165 Camel Saddle

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Wood, leather  
L: 54.6 cm, W: 40.6 cm, H: 42.5  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001728-25

Made of palm wood and tied leather thongs, this camel saddle has carved linear decorations on both the cantle and pommel.

### 166 Camel Trapping

Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Wool  
L: 61.0 cm, W: 86.4 cm, Ropes: L: 228.6 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection 001731-3

This elaborate camel trapping is made of woven wool and fits over the head of the camel with the ropes placed along its sides and tied under the tail. It is heavily decorated with buttons, beads and colored tassels.





### 167 Camel Milk Bowl

Western Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Wood, silver, brass  
L: 14.0 cm, W: 22.9 cm, H: 15.2 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001728-23

Decorated with inset silver nails in a geometric pattern, this wooden camel milk bowl is further ornamented with brass studs around its circumference.



### 168 Leather Food Bag

Taif region, Saudi Arabia  
20th Century  
Leather  
L: 137.2 cm, W: 111.8 cm  
McClure Archives and University Museum, University of Central Missouri Nance Collection  
001730-12

This large leather food bag is decorated with cut leather and dyed leather tassels.



Made from the complete skin of a goat, this storage bag has ink and cut leather geometric designs in the center.



### 171 Saddle

Lur Nomads, Luristan, Khorramabad Region, Iran  
20th century  
Cloth (wool)  
L: 110.0 cm, W: 47.0 cm  
American Museum of Natural History 70.2/8428 (1971-58)

This saddle is made of two narrow loom products folded over and sewn to make bags which are stuffed with straw before the saddle is put on the horse's back. The saddle is white, red, and black wool, and the top side of the bags is decorated with two intertwined loops that form a long fringe on the sides. These two bags are held together by two small loom products. One has warp ends made into two long braids with a loop at the end which interlocks a plaited cinch, and the other is a loop attachment for the cinch at the opposite end. The saddle has a heavy wool crupper wrapped by rags.



### 170 Saddlebags

Syria  
20th century  
L: 175.0 cm, W: 50.0 cm  
Cloth, worsted  
American Museum of Natural History 70.0/1828 (1916-47)

These wool saddlebags are brown in the center and decorated with bands of black and white along their edges. Each of the two bag flaps have three rows of tassels in red, orange, green, and blue, with a line of cowrie shells at the top of each row. The saddlebags have a slit in the center and long black goat hair tassels at either end.



### 172 Saddle Frontpiece, Decorated

Saudi Arabia

20th century

Leather, cloth, metal beads

L: 76.0 cm, W: 41.0 cm, H: 1.0 cm, L: 78.0 cm, W: 76.0 cm, H: 2.0 cm (with tassels)

American Museum of Natural History

70.3/999 (1976-17)

The Bedouin often used decorated leather pieces, known as *miraka*, in front of their saddles. This example has a decorative band of red wool backed with white cotton along its lower edge. There is a floss geometric pattern in magenta, green, orange, and yellow with metal beading on either side. The bottom of the *miraka* has braided leather thongs that end in tassels.

### 173 Bag

Saudi Arabia

20th century

Leather

L: 84.0 cm, W: 24.0 cm, H: 1.0 cm, L: 98.0 cm (with tassels)

American Museum of Natural History

70.3/1000 (1976-17)

This bag, perhaps used for coffee or money, appears to be made of the leather from the body and a pair of legs from a gazelle. It has straps and braided thongs ending in tassels dyed green and magenta.



### 174 Antar

Syria

20th century

H: 99.6 cm, W: 81.6 cm

Collection of Judith Forbis

This depiction of the famed pre-Islamic knight Antar was the work of painter from a village in the north of Syria. This artist, who died in 1969 at the age of 97, was completely untutored, and all of his paintings were scenes depicting the legends of Antar and his beloved Abla. The story of Antar represents the best of Bedouin heroism, chivalry, and valor and this poet-warrior is often portrayed in folk art, particularly in Syria.



### 175 Complete Holy Qur'an

Saudi Arabia  
17th century  
H: 18.0 cm, W: 11.0 cm, (closed), H:  
18.0 cm, W: 24.0 cm (open)  
King Abdul Aziz Public Library  
1600

This complete *mushaf* from Surah Al-Fātiḥah to Surah Al-Nās is written in black ink, with diacritical marks, inside red and blue ruled margins. It was written during Ramadan in 1025H (1616 CE), in Makkah in front of the Holy Ka'bah, and was compared to a copy written by the noble scholar Al-Mulla Ali Al-Qari who died in the year 1014H.

The term *mushaf* refers to the physical bound volume in which the Qur'ān is written. The word Qur'ān literally means ‹the recitation› and does not have a plural in Arabic.



### 176 Complete Holy Qur'an

Safavid, 16th century  
H: 36.0 cm, W: 24.0 cm (closed), H:  
36.0 cm, W: 48.0 cm (open)  
King Abdul Aziz Public Library  
3929

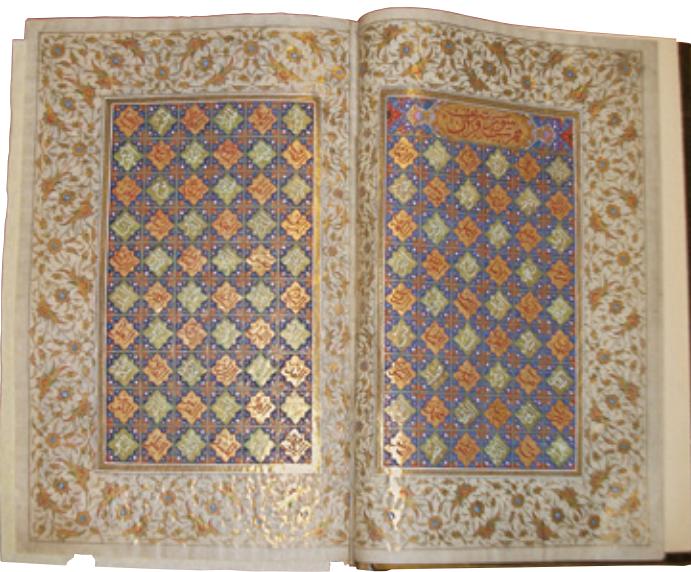
This complete *mushaf* from Surah Al-Fātiḥah to Surah Al-Nās is written with diacritical marks within multicolored borders in black ink, gold leaf, and liquid turquoise. Extra attention was given to the first and last pages, as they were garnished with gold and turquoise geometric and floral designs. This manuscript is an imperial copy bound in natural leather and covered by wood with a tenon. Some of the wood has been carved out to make floral designs. It was written in approximately the tenth century *hijri* (sixteenth century Gregorian) during the Safavid era.



### 177 Complete Holy Qur'an

16th century  
H: 29.0 cm, W: 18.0 cm (closed), H: 29.0 cm, W: 36.0 cm (open)  
King Abdul Aziz Public Library  
1895

This is a complete *mushaf* from Surah Al-Fātihah to Surah Al-Nās. It is written in black ink, with diacritical marks, inside golden borders, and under each Arabic word is its Persian equivalent. There are botanical patterns and geometric shapes decorated with gold leaf and a number of other colors at the beginning of some surahs (chapters). The manuscript dates to the year 920H (1514 CE) and has leather binding with embedded designs.



### 178 Complete Holy Qur'an

19th Century  
H: 35.0 cm, W: 22.0 cm (closed), H: 35.0 cm, W: 40.0 cm (open)  
King Abdul Aziz Public Library  
2332

This complete *mushaf* from Surah Al-Fātihah to Surah Al-Nās is written in black ink with diacritical marks, inside golden, green, red, and blue colored borders. The footnotes of the first and last pages are embellished with gold leaf botanical designs. Inside the ruled margins are impressions in the shape of Islamic decorations. The blue color was extracted from turquoise that lends a beautiful appearance to the decoration. At the beginning of the *mushaf*, an index of the surahs (chapters) was written in italics inside small squares by the famous Iranian calligrapher Muhammad Sharif Afshar, in Jumādā Al-Awwal 1270H (1853 CE). This manuscript is deemed to be from the imperial manuscripts, which are written for a ruler with great care and precision over a long period. It is bound with impermeable Persian leather. Paper extracted from rice husks was placed in between the manuscript's pages to prevent colors from overlapping.



### 179 Part of Holy Qur'an

14th century  
H: 24.0 cm, W: 17.0 cm (closed), H: 24.0 cm, W: 35 cm (open)  
King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies  
02513

This is a part of a noble *mushaf* written in *naskh* script in approximately the eighth century (fourteenth century Gregorian). It begins with Surah al-Anbiy (The Prophets) and ends with Surah al-Hajj. The beginning of the manuscript has colorful decorations and elegant botanical designs. The surah headings are on gold panels, some of the verses (*āyāt*) were written with gold leaf, and all of its pages have borders. It has leather binding decorated with gilded botanical-shaped carvings. This is one volume of a complete *mushaf* bound in separate parts, and there are other volumes from it at the Center.



### 180 Khorasan Strap Ends

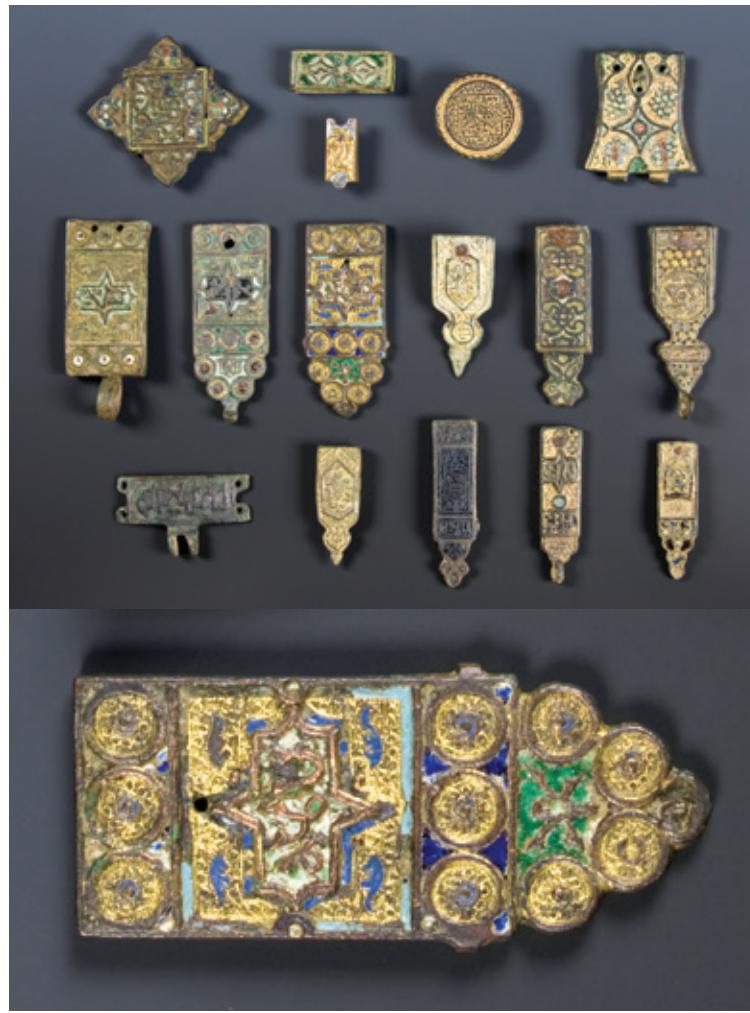
?Khorasan, Iran  
9th - 11th century  
Copper alloy  
H: (largest) 4.6 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-430, 433-4, 436-8, 440-41, 451, 460

These broad strap ends with pointed tips derive from earlier Sasanian models. They are variously cast with bosses, reserved heraldic devices and decorative cut-outs. They were used to weight and decorate the ends of leather straps hanging from belts or horse harnesses.

### 181 Nasrid Mounts

Nasrid, Spain  
14th - 15th century  
Copper alloy; enamel, gilding  
H: (largest) 7.1 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-488-9, 501, 505-6, 510, 516, 532, 559-62, 566-7, 569

Intricately decorated with stars, circles and geometric designs, many of these harness and belt mounts from Spain are also brightly enameled, reflecting a blend of Muslim and European traditions.



### 182 Mace

Hungary  
15th century  
Steel, wood, velvet, gold, silver  
Dia: 6.5 cm, L: 52.7 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-114



183 Macehead

Iran  
Samanid, 10th - 11th century  
Copper alloy  
H: 16.0 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-93

This macehead cast as stacked dodecahedrons studded with bosses is unique although its long form, flared socketed base and ribbed knob at the top can be compared to a large class of Iranian maceheads of the Saljūq period. The bold geometric forms, however, find some parallels in Samanid metalwork and it may well be of this earlier period.



184 Set of Harness Mounts  
Anatolia or Egypt  
11th century  
Copper alloy  
H: 6.0 - 9.5 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-546



185 Mace

Siebenburg, Hungary  
c. 1590 - 1600  
Wood, copper, gilding  
Dia: 10.0 cm, L: 58.0 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-109

A fragment of a ninth century 'Abbasid *furusiyah* treatise refers to the mace as "the most important weapon in war in all times and situations. It is among weapons like a lion among animals, and all people acknowledge its virtue and prefer it to other (close-combat) weapons because no other arm can replace it."<sup>1</sup> A

weapon of great importance in the Islamic world, favored by horsemen in hand-to-hand combat, maces also had a symbolic importance, and in the Ottoman Empire in particular became a symbol of office. The cylindrical head of this mace is worked with a band of linked quatrefoils enclosing, and surrounded by, stemmed blossoms.

<sup>1</sup> S. Al-Sarraf, "Close Combat Weapons in the Early Abbasid Period: Maces, Axes and Swords" in *Companion to Medieval Arms and Armour*, D. Nicolle (ed.), Woodbridge, 2002, p. 155.



**186 The Mecca Pilgrims on Their Journey  
Home to Cairo Carrying the Holy Carpet of  
Mohammed's Grave**

Carl Goebel

1855, printed by J. Rank, published by Anton Paternos Witwe, Vienna

Hand-colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper

H: 65.0 cm, W: 79.5 cm (unframed sheet)

H: 59.0 cm, W: 70.5 cm (image),

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

Carl Goebel (1824-99) was an official painter to the Imperial Court of Austria. This colorful and intricate lithograph depicts a caravan returning to Cairo from a pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca. The subtitle of the work suggests that this was an Ottoman caravan since many relics were taken from Mecca to Egypt, and eventually to Istanbul during the Ottoman occupation of parts of Arabia.



### 187 Horse Harness Mount

Late or post-Khazar, 11th century

Copper alloy, gilding

H: 7.4 cm

Furusiyah Art Foundation

R-838

The openwork pendant depicts a mounted warrior carrying an axe with a large curved blade and a socket in line with the shaft. He rides with a saddle but without stirrups. Such mounts would have been suspended from the straps of horse harness and originally had small bells at the bottom. The battle axe resembles those used by the Kievan Rus' (a Slavic/Scandinavian confederation based in Kiev) who superseded the Khazars as masters of the North Pontic region.



### 188 Lion Macehead

Ghorid

11th - 13th century

Copper alloy, iron

H: 21.5 cm

Furusiyah Art Foundation

R-837

This magnificent mace is cast in the round as a fierce leaping lion with open jaws, a pearly collar and with solar whorls on his hip joints. A portion of the iron shaft survives at the base. A fragment of a ninth century 'Abbasid *furusiyah* treatise refers to the mace as "the most important weapon in war in all times and situations. It is among weapons like a lion among animals, and all people acknowledge its virtue and prefer it to other (close-combat) weapons because no other arm can replace it."<sup>1</sup> Lions obviously had connotations of great strength and accounts of iron batons from the 'Abbasid and Umayyad periods consistently refer to their great weight, ranging from an extraordinary 22.2 kilograms to the more probable 10 kilograms. The provenance of this example suggests it was made for a warrior (perhaps a Turkic slave soldier or ghulam) fighting for the Persian Ghorid Dynasty whose large kingdom at its height comprised all of modern Afghanistan and parts of eastern Iran, India and Pakistan.

<sup>1</sup> S. Al-Sarraf. "Close Combat Weapons in the Early 'Abbasid Period: Maces, Axes and Swords" in *Companion to Medieval Arms and Armour*, D. Nicolle (ed.). Woodbridge. 2002. p. 155.

### 189 The Caroussel

Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker  
1846, published by Autenrieth, Stuttgart  
Chalk lithograph on tinted paper, hand-colored and highlighted with gold  
H: 47.0 cm, W: 60.0 cm (unframed sheet)

H: 33.5 cm, W: 46.0 cm (image size)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

The Caroussel was ridden in 1846 at an elaborate Oriental/ Occidental tournament to celebrate the wedding of His Royal Highness Crown Prince of Württemberg (later King Karl I of Württemberg) to Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Olga Nicolajewna, the daughter of the Russian Czar. The purebred Arabian horses ridden in the tournament were all imported from the Arabian desert or bred by the Royal Stud of Weil.

These Caroussel prints were commissioned by Privy Councillor Knight of Hackländer as a wedding gift to the royal couple. He chose Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker, two of the most famous equine artists of the time, to portray the tournament. Carl Kurtz (1817-1887) studied art both in Stuttgart and at the Vienna Academy of Arts and was awarded the Legion of Honour by King Wilhelm I of Württemberg. Johann Baptist Zwecker (1814-1876), who illustrated many classical works of literature as well as painting portraits and horses, studied at the Städels Art Institute in Frankfurt and the Düsseldorf Art Academy.



### 190 Strap End

Khazar  
9th - 10th century  
Silver, gilding  
H: 4.2 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-839

This strap end is decorated on both sides – on the front a mounted warrior executes a Parthian shot with a recurved

bow and on the reverse a profile bird of prey is worked in relief against a gilded ground. The horseman rides in a saddle on a thick blanket with his leg thrust forward in a rounded stirrup; his oblong box quiver, open at the top, is slung at his right side. The horse's body is detailed with bands of short

parallel grooves and its tail is shown as bound into a knot. The rope-like border and its distinctive decoration are features of metalwork produced across a wide area stretching from the Caucasus across the northern Pontic region and into eastern Europe in this time period.



### 191 The Caroussel

Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker  
1846, published by Autenrieth, Stuttgart  
Chalk lithograph on tinted paper, hand-colored and highlighted with gold  
H: 47.0 cm, W: 60.0 cm (unframed sheet)



### 192 The Caroussel

Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker  
1846, published by Autenrieth, Stuttgart  
Chalk lithograph on tinted paper, hand-colored and highlighted with gold  
H: 47.0 cm, W: 60.0 cm (unframed sheet)  
H: 33.5 cm, W: 46.0 cm (image size)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

### 193 The Caroussel

Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker  
1846, published by Autenrieth, Stuttgart  
Chalk lithograph on tinted paper, hand-colored and highlighted with gold  
H: 47.0 cm, W: 60.0 cm (unframed sheet)  
H: 33.5 cm, W: 46.0 cm (image size)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme





### 194 Dish with a Mounted Warrior

Acquired in Syria

c. 1250

Painted green, brown and purple with sgraffiato under a clear glaze

Dia: 26.3 cm, H: 11.7 cm

The British Museum

BM 1931,0716.1

Acquired in Syria, this dish is similar to fragments of pottery found at several sites in Syria associated with the Crusades.

The mounted archer depicted on the dish is wearing a garment with ornamental bands on the sleeves (*tiraz*) and has a fitted turban or helmet on his head. Details of his costume suggest a date of the mid-thirteenth century.

Painted green, brown, and purple under a clear glaze, this dish is a type of pottery called sgraffiato ware because the design is incised through a slip into the clay body before firing. This technique was introduced to the Near East from China during the ninth century.

### 195 Set of Belt Mounts

Fatimid

10th - 11th century

Silver, gilding, niello

H: (largest) 5.0 cm

Furusiyah Art Foundation

R-1003





196 **Chamfron**

Ottoman  
c. 1517-1520  
Steel, gold  
H: 52.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-875

Chamfrons are a form of armor used to protect the vulnerable front of a warhorse's head. This type of equine armor was commonly used in the ancient world and the first chamfrons were likely made of leather. Steel chamfrons in the Islamic world were often inscribed and decorated and this Ottoman chamfron of steel and gold is inscribed with the name of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I.



197 CHAMFRON

Ottoman  
17th century  
Steel  
L: 51.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-155



198 CHAMFRON

India  
17th century  
Steel  
H: 50.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-978



199 CHAMFRON

Ottoman  
late 15th - 16th century  
Steel, silver, brass  
H: 55.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-968



### 200 Bowl Fragment

Syria  
Ayyubid, 12th-13th Century  
Fritware; underglaze-painted  
Dia: 12.5 cm, H: 5.7 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers  
Fund, 1910  
10.44.8

Decoration on the interior of this bowl fragment consists of a cantering horse wearing elaborate tack amid foliage principally consisting of branches bearing pomegranates. The exterior decoration consists only of a singular circular band comprised of a series of overlapping S's. The underglaze is painted in green and brownish red on opaque white glazed ground under clear colorless glaze with a slight greenish tint. An opaque glaze covers the exterior and interior of the foot.

### 201 Jar

Syria  
Ayyubid, 12th-13th century  
Fritware; carved and painted under a transparent turquoise glaze.  
D. 17.1 cm, H: 23.2 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O.  
Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of  
Horace Havemeyer, 1956  
56.185.22



### 202 Vase

Syria  
Ayyubid, 12th century  
Fritware; painted in luster and blue on an opaque white glaze under a transparent colorless glaze  
Gr. Dia: 17.8 cm, H: 24.8 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, H.O.  
Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace  
Havemeyer, 1948  
48.113.13

The body of this Ayyubid vase bears a wide decorative band divided by four circular motifs into four cartouches. Two cartouches contain cursive inscription in contour panels on ground of tight spirals, and the other two have a reserved arabesque design composed of a pair of split palmettes which, in one of the cartouches, is enclosed by another pair of split palmettes. The circular motifs separating the four cartouches each comprise a central roundel filled with X's bordered by an underglaze-painted circular band of turquoise alternating with cobalt. They are flanked by luster-painted bands, the outermost bearing evenly spaced dots on its outer edge. This band is bordered top and bottom by a band of pseudo-calligraphic decoration on dotted ground that is, in turn, bordered, top and bottom, by a broad, plain band. The cylindrical neck is also decorated with a band of pseudo-calligraphic decoration on dotted ground bordered top and bottom by a broad, plain band. The underglaze is painted in cobalt and turquoise blue on opaque white glazed ground under a clear, colorless, glaze with greenish tint and luster-painted in chocolate brown. Opaque glaze covers the exterior and interior of the foot ring as well as the base of the vessel. This vessel is made in two sections, joined at the mid-section.



This jar is an example of "Raqqa ware" produced in Raqqa, Syria, a provincial center of pottery production during this time period. Raqqa is situated on the left bank of the Euphrates River. It remained a significant center from its founding in the third century BCE through the period of the Ilkhanids (1256-1353), by whom the city was destroyed in 1265. Under the Ayyubid ruler Salah al-Din (r. 1171-93), the city reached its highest period of prosperity.

"Raqqa ware" was widely collected by Ottoman and European diplomats and wealthy collectors. "Raqqa ware" is undoubtedly the most widely known and discussed medieval Syrian pottery. The most popular techniques used were luster painting and underglaze painting.<sup>1</sup>

This jar is decorated with underglaze painting in black against an opaque white glaze under a transparent turquoise glaze.

<sup>1</sup> Cristina Tonghini, "The Fine Wares of Ayyubid Syria," in Cobalt and Lustre: The First Centuries of Islamic Pottery, 249-293, 1994

### 203 Ewer

Syria

Ayyubid, Late 12<sup>th</sup> - first half of 13th century

Fritware; painted in luster and blue on an opaque white glaze under a transparent colorless glaze

Gr. Dia: 13.3 cm, H: 18.7 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, H.O.

Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace

Havemeyer, 1948

48.113.16

This ewer is another example of "Raqqa ware." The decoration consists of a wide band containing four evenly spaced roundels bearing geometric repeated patterns circumscribed by an underglaze-painted frame bordered by thin luster-painted lines. The interstitial areas bear a reserved arabesque design on a spiralling ground. A broad, plain band borders the principal band at the bottom and there is a band of pseudo-calligraphy on dotted ground at the top. The neck of the vessel is decorated with an underglaze-painted cursive inscription in contour panels on a spiralling ground. There is a broad, plain band at the rim of the vessel, and an underglaze-painted handle with four luster-painted stripes. The vessel is underglaze-painted in cobalt blue on opaque white glazed ground under a clear, colorless glaze and luster-painted in chocolate brown. An opaque glaze covers the exterior and interior of the foot ring as well as the base of the vessel. The clear, colorless glaze does not extend onto the exterior of the foot ring.

The translation of the Arabic inscription is "good wishes."



### 205 Jar

Syria

Ayyubid, 12th-13th century

Fritware; carved and painted under a transparent glaze

Dia: 12.7 cm, H: 14.0 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O.

Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of

Horace Havemeyer, 1956

56.185.7

The jar, produced in Raqqa, Syria, has a cylindrical body with straight sides tapering slightly at the top with a sharply angled narrow shoulder and a short cylindrical neck with an everted rim. It stands on a low, hollow foot. The principal decoration consists of a carved and painted decoration in black against an opaque white ground, under a transparent turquoise glaze. The entire body bears a carved benedictory inscription in Arabic, written in a cursive *thuluth* script, and is bordered above and below by a plain black band. The shoulder of the jar shows a band of vegetal scrolls in black, and the neck has a pseudo-kufic inscription band. The rim is edged in black. The opaque glaze covers the exterior and interior of the foot ring as well as the base of the vessel.

The Arabic on the body of the jar reads: "Con[tinuous] glory, con[tinuous] prosperity." (Translated by H. McAllister)



### 204 Mirror

Saljuq, 10th - 11th century

Copper alloy

Dia: 8.1 cm

Furusiyha Art Foundation

R-2093



**206 Jug**

Khurasan  
13th century  
Copper alloy, silver  
H: 16.5 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-2007

The body of the jug is decorated with three figures - in the center opposite the handle a helmeted prince sits cross-legged on a lion throne between two dragon-headed staffs flanked by courtiers bearing maces; the scene is enclosed within a lobed cartouche. On either side mounted warriors gallop forward with banners on their lances. All the figures are inlaid with silver sheets engraved with details of their features and

dress. Around the neck is an extraordinary animated *naskh* inscription with vertical strokes rendered as complete human figures and the horizontal strokes taking the form of birds and animals. The figures appear in pairs and are shown on foot, fighting with spears, maces, bows, swords and shields. The inscription closes with another seated figure and can be read as: *Glory! Prosperity! Permanence! Happiness! Well-Being!* Although the scenes depict the arts of war the dragon-headed staffs represent the Jawzahr dragon, symbol of the lunar eclipse, and thus have an astronomical significance.



**207 Mirror**

Persia  
11th-12th century  
Copper alloy  
Dia: 6.6 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-2094

This mirror is decorated with a hunting scene of a rider on horseback carrying a falcon; his horse has a knotted tail and a looped mane resembling button braiding.



**208 Equestrian Bowl**

Nishapur, Persia  
10th century  
Clay, slip, glaze  
Dia: 22.4 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-3009



### 209 Inkwell

Khorasan  
2nd half of 12th century  
Copper alloy, silver, copper  
H: 11.5 cm  
Furusiyia Art Foundation  
R-2030

Panels around the body enclose linked roundels displaying three horsemen turned outwards to the viewer, riding above hounds; their bodies are inlaid with silver sheet engraved with their features and details of dress. One holds a hawk, another a lion-headed mace and the third rides with a winged cheetah perched on the rump of his horse. Bound palmette scrolls fill the interstices of the panels. A frieze of hunting hounds and hares encircle the rim of the lid between the loops, while on the top of the lid three linked roundels show seated figures. Between the roundels

gallop harnessed horses, hounds and birds on a ring-matte ground; two tendrils curling up from the frame end in dragon and bull heads. The inkwell stands on ball feet and is engraved on the bottom with panels of running hounds against scrolls and a central game bird. Such inkwells were designed to hold liquid ink and cords passing through loops on the lid and body helped secure the two pieces and allowed the piece to be lifted and carried. The decoration of the body and lid celebrates the courtly pursuit of hunting, although some of the motifs, such as the dragon and bull, may also allude to astrological symbols. The form and style are comparable to pieces produced in Herat in Khorasan in the second half of the twelfth and early thirteenth century.

### 210 Glazed Ceramic Depiction of Two Mounted Archers

Kashan, central Iran  
c. 1175-1225  
Frit with black slip under transparent turquoise glaze  
Dia: 28.0 cm  
The British Museum  
BM 1964,1013.2

This bosse is one of the earliest known representations of archers shooting at a high target. Known as *qabaq*, this military sport had ceremonial significance as well as being important in developing archery and horsemanship skills. In this depiction two horsemen flank a tree with another figure below. The object is painted in black under a turquoise glaze on a white surface. The function of this ceramic piece is not known, but it may have been part of a decorative frieze in tile work.





**211 Inkwell**

Al Jazira or West Persia

c. 1275

Copper alloy, gold, silver lead

H: 5.9 cm

Furusiyya Art Foundation

R-2032

This thirteenth century inkwell of copper alloy depicts three horsemen on the body. One is shown with bow and arrows, another with a polo stick, and the third armed with a saber. The horses are bridled with curb bits and have saddles of rounded side flaps with breastplates and crupper straps. A frieze with running animals, both realistic and mythical, decorates the rim of the top of the inkwell.



**213 Islamic Astrolabe**

Egypt

Ayyubid, c. 1236

Silver, copper inlaid and engraved brass

The British Museum

BM 1855,0709.1

The astrolabe is an object probably invented by the Greeks in the second century BCE. Knowledge of it was transmitted to the Muslims through the translations of Hellenistic and Byzantine texts into Arabic. The translation of scientific texts was done in Baghdad during the early Abbasid era. While the Abbasid period lasted from 750-1258 CE, the earliest astrolabes and astrolabe treatises date to the ninth century. The astrolabe provides a two-dimensional map of the heavens and it served in particular to find the direction of Mecca which Muslims face when they pray, and was used to determine the times of prayer which were astrologically defined. This extremely important example has figural designs representing the constellations on the front and back. It gives the name of the maker, Abd al-Karim al-Misri, who is known through other signed astrolabes.



**212 Bowl**

Muzzafarid, Fars, Iran

14th-15th century

Brass, silver and gold

D: 23.0 cm

Furusiyya Art Foundation

R-2079

This brass bowl is inlaid with silver and gold and decorated with a series of cartouches on a vegetal arabesque background. The cartouches include several detailed scenes of riders on horseback and a ruler with his subjects.



215 Pen Case with Zodiac Signs, Warriors and Hunters

Iran

c. 1281

Brass inlaid with silver niello and gold

L: 19.7 cm, W: 5.2 cm, H: 3.1 cm

The British Museum

BM 1891,0623.5

214 Brass Celestial Globe

Mosul, northern Iraq

Islamic, c.1271

Silver inlaid brass

Dia: 24.1 cm (globe) H: 36.5 (stand)

The British Museum

BM 1871,0301.1a-b

A celestial globe is a representation of the heavens rather than the earth. Often used to teach astronomy, the globe was set in the horizon ring at the position appropriate to the viewer's location so the viewer could see the stars visible at that latitude. By rotating the globe it was also possible to see their risings, meridians, transits, and settings.

This thirteenth century celestial globe has talismans and *nasxi* inscriptions and was made by Muhammad ibn Hibal, the "astronomer from Mosul."

This pen box, possibly Ayyubid, is decorated with astrological scenes and is signed by Mahmud ibn Sunqur. The top of the lid bears roundels in three groups of four containing symbols of the zodiac with their ruling planets. Examples include the Sun in Leo, shown as the sun rising behind a lion, and Venus in Libra, depicted as a woman playing a harp beneath some scales. The interior of the lid has roundels containing the personifications of the planets alone. The base has two scenes of horsemen fighting one another or a double-headed dragon which may symbolize the solar eclipse. The spaces between these images are filled with animal interlace.



216 Disc with Hunting Scene

Persia

12th - 13th century

Glass

Dia: 9.0 cm

Furusiyha Art Foundation

R-3014



### 217 Stirrup

Iran  
Saljūq, 12th century  
Copper alloy  
H: 11.3 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-951

The stirrup has a rounded upper section curving to a low point; its front surface is finely engraved with panels depicting a running hound on one side and a hare on the other, both against scrolled foliage. A triangular section at the top above the slot is also decorated. The base has two ribbed mouldings. The elegant form and the small projections at the junction of the upper section and footplate are typically Saljūq.



### 218 Stirrup

Iran  
Saljūq, 12th century  
Copper alloy  
H: 11.1 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-952

The stirrup is narrow, but the arms of the upper section are not parallel to one another, but slope downwards; they are also shaped with a small notch at either side of the top and with square knob-like protrusions at the junction with the plate. The footplate is relatively narrow with a central rib and there is no decoration above the wide strap slot. The scrolled panels on the arms appear to depict leaping felines with exceedingly long hind legs. This type appears to represent a chronological development from stirrups such as R-379 but may simply represent a different school of production.



### 219 Stirrup

Iran  
Saljūq, 11th - 12th century  
Copper alloy  
H: 11.2 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-378

This rounded stirrup is engraved on the front side with panels of long-bodied dragons against foliage and on the reverse with foliage alone. A small triangular panel above the narrow slot is also engraved. The underside of the footplate is ribbed. Stirrups of this general shape fashioned with the forward section in a different plane to the rounded footplates were in use as early as the eighth to ninth centuries by Turkic warriors fighting in the Caucasus and southern Russia. Footplates with ribbed undersides also developed

at this time period. It is, therefore, likely that the forms were introduced to the Saljūq Turcs from the north.



### 221 Pair of Stirrups

Iran  
Saljūq, 11th - 12th century  
Copper alloy  
H: 11.2 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-379



### 220 Stirrup

Iran  
Saljūq, 12th century  
Iron, silver, gold  
H: 16.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-374

The stirrup has wide flattened sides curving to a pointed tip above the slot for attaching the strap. The front surface is inlaid with gold arabesques in silver-outlined panels with small silver X's below the slot. The

integral footplate is of the same width as the sides, but hammered out in the opposite plane to the upper decorated section. As this stirrup is considerably larger than many other surviving examples (for example, R-378-9, 951-2) it was perhaps made for an armored warrior carrying a lance where they may have provided extra stability for delivering a thrust.

These stirrups have narrow proportions with parallel U-shaped upper arms engraved with scrolled panels. The footplate is a flat rectangular sheet of metal. There are flattened extensions of the arms below their junction with the footplate. Matched pairs of stirrups of this date are relatively rare.

## 222 Glass Pilgrim Flask

Syria

Mamluk, c. 1250 - 1260

Gilded and enameled glass

L: 23.0 cm, W: 16.2 cm, H: 23.0 cm

The British Museum

BM 1866,0120.3

Syrian glassmakers were known for their fine work in the production of mosque lamps, bottles, beakers, and flasks. Some scholars suggest they were the first to use the technique of enameling and gilding on glass beginning in the late twelfth century.

This glass piece is modeled after a pilgrim flask and is enameled in blue, green, yellow, red, white, and black, with gilding. On one side it is decorated with a large palmette filled with an arabesque design. On the other two sides there are a seated banqueter and seated lutenist that each has a mounted rider above. Depicted throwing spears at wolf-like animals, the riders are wearing flowing cloaks, long tunics and rounded broad brimmed helmets. The horses, a grey and a chestnut, are wearing bridles with curb bits, decorated neck bands, breastbands, and striped saddle clothes.



## 223 Basin

Syria

Mamluk, 14th Century

Glass; enameled

Dia: 29.2 cm, H: 16.5 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection,

Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891

91.1.1532

This Mamluk enameled basin is free-blown glass with tooled lip, pontil mark on base, and enameled and gilt decoration. There is a broad band of Arabic inscriptions in *thuluth* script in a foliate scroll on the basin, with scalloped medallions barring floral designs repeated four times on a central band, and six times around the rim. A large eight-petal rosette is enameled on the interior of the base. This shape is found in Ayyubid metal ware from the mid-thirteenth century.

The Arabic inscription on the body reads: *Glory to our Lord, the Sultan, the King, the Wise* and is repeated three times. (Translation by N. Martinovitch)





**224 Blacas Ewer**

Mosul, Iraq  
Islamic, c. 1232  
Brass with silver and copper inlay  
D: 21.5 cm, W: 22.0 cm, H: 30.4 cm  
The British Museum  
BM 1866,1229.61

This brass inlaid ewer, inscribed by its maker, Shuja' ibn Man'a, was made in Mosul, Iraq during the reign of Badr al-Din Abu'l Fada'il Lu'l'. In addition to the name of the maker and date of manufacture, the inscription in Arabic around the body of the ewer reads:  
*Glory, long life, and ease, (God's) sympathy, blessing, health, felicity, victory over enemies, superiority, and (God's) protection forever for its owner.*

Once in the possession of the Duke de Blacas, a nineteenth century French Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, this ewer is important in tracing the style and influence of Mosul metalwork, and is one of six inlaid brasses known to have been made during this period. Decoration around the faceted body of the ewer likely represents daily life in the court of Badr al-Din. Depictions include musicians, banqueters, astrological scenes and several images of a ruler in various roles. Several means of hunting are depicted, including the use of falcons and cheetahs. The ewer also has scenes of combat, such as a mounted warrior with a sword and shield engaged with a soldier on foot.



**225 Mosque Lamp**

Egypt or Syria  
Mamluk, 14th Century  
Glass; enameled and gilded  
H: 28.2 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917  
17.190.992

This type of glass was decorated with a brush and was then fired in the kiln at a temperature that would stabilize the design permanently on the surface without compromising the glass's shape. There are two different types of painted glass: one is stained; and the other is enameled. This mosque lamp is an example of the latter. The practice of enameling and gilding glass was prominent during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Mamluk sultans and members of their court commissioned large glass lamps of this type for mosques, madrasas (Qur'anic schools), tombs, hospices, and other public buildings in fourteenth century Cairo. This particular lamp is clear glass of golden tone. Decoration on the neck consists of rondels with a flower in red, blue, green, and gold on white ground, and blue bands with scrolls in reserve. On the body of the lamp the decoration consists of inscriptions reserved on blue ground with borders and spaces between rondels ornamented with red flourishes and flowers in colors, and outlines in red on gold. There are six loops for suspension of the lamp and a foot is attached.

The Arabic inscription on the body reads: *The Wise* repeated twelve times.  
(Translation by N. Martinovitch)



## 226 Bottle

France  
c. 1870-80  
Free-blown glass; enameled and gilded  
Dia: 24.0 cm, H: 50.0 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Anthony Blumka, in honor of Justin Frederick Nasatir, 1998  
1998.396

Blue, red, green, white, and yellow enamels were applied to the surface of this large bottle to form a central band with an inscription repeated four times and separated by large circular medallions. Confronted birds were drawn in the spaces left outside the medallions, and the same inscription is repeated at the base of the neck. A second band in the center of the neck

depicts the image of a phoenix. Vegetal decoration fills in all the remaining spaces, while the foot was left without enamels. The surface was also heavily gilded, including the foot, but the gilding has mostly vanished.

The Arabic on the central band and at the base of the neck of the bottle reads: *the Learned* (translated by S. Carboni). This bottle is attributed to the French artist Philippe-Joseph Brocard, Paris. A gilded and enameled bottle of the same shape is signed "Brocard à Paris 1869."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stefano Carboni and David Whitehouse, *Glass of the Sultans*, 2001



## 227 Candlestick

Iran  
13th -14th century  
Brass, originally inlaid with silver  
Dia: (at base) 25.5 cm, H: 30.9 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891  
91.1.525

This candlestick, originally inlaid with silver, depicts a huntsman, a typical motif in thirteenth to fourteenth century Iranian metalwork. This motif is found on brass bowls as well as candlesticks. Some suggest a connection between designs on metal objects and those created for the arts of the book.<sup>1</sup>

The Arabic inscriptions on the neck, shoulder and body read: *Fortune, Favors, Glory, Triumph, Prosperity, and Munificence ... Glory, Victory, Prosperity, Munificence, Fortune, Favors, Happiness, and Salvation and Glory to our Lord, the greatest King, the great Sultan of tribes and the Sultan of Sultans*.

<sup>1</sup> Exhibition Catalogue; Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, 2002.



### 228 Bottle

Egypt or Syria

Mamluk, first half of 14th century

Glass; free blown, enameled and gilded; tooled on the pontil

H: 50.2 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer

Bequest, 1936

36.33

This bottle of clear free-blown and tooled glass of pale amber color has enameled and gilded decoration. There is a ring around the upper part of the neck of the bottle, and a hollow, cone-shaped foot with pontil mark on the base. Decoration on the bottle includes a lower border with an outline of four heart-shaped palmettes, with blue split palmettes between them. There is a blue medallion with a bird of prey attacking a goose in each palmette, reserved and gilded, and framed in gilded designs of Chinese lotuses or peonies. Between the palmettes is a circle enclosing trefoils of green, yellow, red, and pink between pellets of blue. On the shoulder there are bands of coursing animals (wolf, gazelle, fox, bear, hare) reserved in blue ground and gilded. The neck of the bottle has three trefoils as on the body, band of scrolls reserved in blue and gilded, and lines of red and blue on a ground of birds, scrolls, and flowers, gilded. All designs are outlined in red.

This Mamluk bottle has the typical height of 30-40 centimeters. The shape was influenced by Ayyubid thirteenth century vessels.



229 Helmet

Mamluk or Ottoman

16th century

Steel, brass

H: 22.0 cm; W: 21.2 cm (greatest)

Furusiyya Art Foundation

R-807



230 Shield

Mamluk

c. 1500, with St. Irene arsenal mark

Steel, copper

Dia: 57.0 cm

Furusiyya Art Foundation

R-883



231 Jar

Syria

Mamluk, 14th century

Grayish earthenware body; underglaze painted in cobalt blue and black on white slip, transparent glaze

H: 33.7 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891

91.1.130

This pear-shaped jar is cobalt blue and black on white, with

spirals and blue leaves between characters, heart-shaped designs on the shoulder, and foliate medallions on the neck.

The lower inscriptions written in black are pseudo-inscriptions, however, the main inscriptions reserved in white express good wishes to the owner of this jar, reading: *Lasting glory, abundant power, and favorable fortune.* (Translated by Tomoko Masuya)



### 232 Untitled

Carle Vernet

1821, published by Delpech, Paris  
Chalk lithograph on wove paper  
H: 41.0 cm, W: 53.0 cm (unframed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

The widespread use of lithography in the nineteenth century enabled a wider circulation of images of Arabian horses, and contributed greatly to their reputation as noble horses of the finest quality. Carle Vernet became a master of the technique of lithography and executed his own drawings on stone to facilitate their reproduction at the highest standards.

This image from "Grande Suite des Chevaux," a series of 20 chalk lithographs published by Delpech of Paris in 1821, depicts a Mamluk and his horse

at the gallop. Vernet captures the details of the elaborate Mamluk attire and tack, and also depicts the tattoos commonly placed on the legs and bodies of Mamluk horses.

### 233 Untitled

Carle Vernet

1821, published by Delpech, Paris  
Chalk lithograph on wove paper  
H: 41.0 cm, W: 53.0 cm (unframed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

This is another lithograph by Carle Vernet from the series "Grande Suite des Chevaux." It portrays a Mamluk and his horse in repose. Arabians were preferred over all other horses as models by Vernet, and he was especially adept at portraying the defining characteristics of the breed.





### 234 Untitled

Carle Vernet

1821, published by Delpech, Paris

Chalk lithograph on wove paper

H: 41.0 cm, W: 53.0 cm (unframed)

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

From "Grande Suite des Chevaux," a series of 20 chalk lithographs published by Delpech, Paris in 1821.

### 235 Mamluke avec Cheval Arabe

Karen Kasper

2007

Bronze

L: 67.0 cm, H: 45.0 cm, W: 22.5 cm

Collection of the Artist

Karen Kasper is a contemporary artist known for her portraiture of Arabian horses. This bronze, depicting a Mamluk and his stallion, is one in a series based on the drawings of the nineteenth century French artist Carle Vernet. The reins of the bridle are the only physical connection between the man and horse in this sculpture, yet the Mamluk and his steed share a stance and focus that suggests a deeper bond. Reflecting Vernet's attention to detail, Kasper meticulously portrays the intricacies of the lavish trappings of the Mamluk period, as well as the spirited expression of their Arabian horses.





CHARGE OF MAMALUKES.

### 236 Mameluck en Vedette (Attacking Mamluk)

Carle Vernet  
1821, published by Ackermann, London  
Hand-colored aquatint  
H: 47.5 cm, W: 65.5 cm (unframed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

The French artist Antoine Charles Horace Vernet, known as Carle Vernet (1758-1836), was the son of the well-known painter Claude Joseph Vernet and the father of another celebrated artist, Horace Vernet. Carle Vernet won considerable acclaim for his detailed drawings of the military campaigns of Napoleon I, and was awarded the Legion of Honour by this French emperor. Vernet was particularly entranced by the Mamluks of Egypt and their horses, and his devotion to this subject

produced many compelling images of Arabian horses.

This hand-colored aquatint, published in 1821, is a dramatic portrayal of a Mamluk attacking the French cavalry during the French invasion of Egypt.

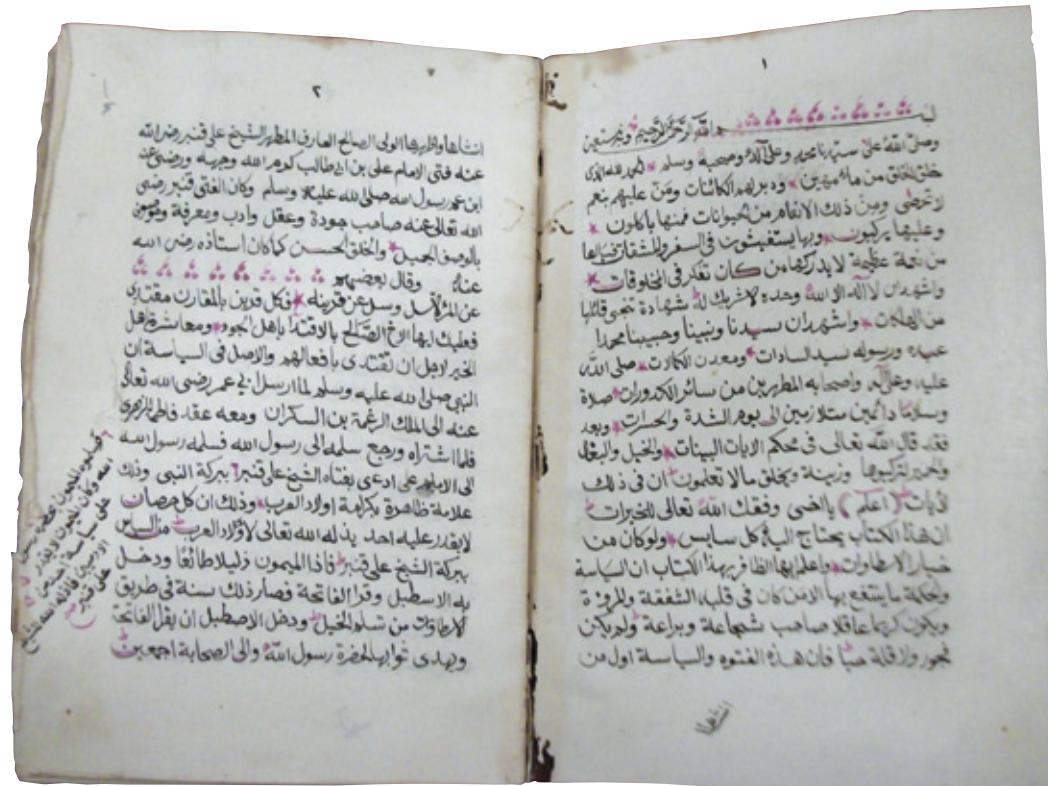
### 237 Mameluck en Retraite (Retreating Mamluk)

Carle Vernet  
1821, published by Ackermann, London  
Hand-colored aquatint  
H: 47.5 cm, W: 65.5 cm (unframed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

The Mamluks were some of the finest cavalry soldiers in history. When Napoleon I invaded Egypt, however, the Mamluk horsemen were unable to withstand the musket and artillery fire of the modern weapons possessed by the French. Yet Napoleon I greatly



admired these brave warriors, dressing his own Arabian horses in their fashion and maintaining a Mamluk guard until his death.



### 238 Horse Manuscripts

Egypt  
19th century

H: 23.0 cm, W: 16.0 cm (closed), H:  
23.0 cm, W: 33.0 cm (open)  
King Faisal Center for Research and  
Islamic Studies  
05899

This group of manuscripts is comprised of three books about horse care and hippiatrics.

The author of the first book is unknown. This book is divided into different chapters, among them: one chapter deals with what is needed in order to become a professional horse keeper; another chapter discusses the characteristics of horses; there is also a chapter on the study and treatment of diseases of horses (hippiatrics). This manuscript has 15 pages and was copied in 1301H (1883 CE) in Cairo.

The second book is a treatise on horse care. The author of

this book is also unknown. The author says in his introduction, after invoking the name of Allah, "To proceed: This treatise is about equitation and horses, the signs that indicate their superiority or inferiority, and the advantages and disadvantages of their riders. It is from the treasures of kings, so do not give it except to one who deserves it." This treatise has nine pages, and was copied in Cairo in the year 1301H (1883 CE).

The third book: *Isbāl Al-thayl fee Thikri Ajyād Al-Khayl*

is written by Muhammad ibn Khairuddeen ibn Ahmad Al-Ramly Al-Shafī'ee, who died around 1121H (1709 CE). He wrote this book to fulfill the request of Prince Mustafa Agha. He cited in this book the Qur'anic Verses and Prophetic Traditions that indicate the virtue of horses and horsemanship, in addition to mentioning some issues related to horse care. The book is forty-seven pages, and was also copied in Cairo in the year 1301H (1883 CE).

### 239 Sabre

Blade: Safavid  
1686  
Steel, silver, gold, niello, wood  
L: 74.3 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-197





240 Dagger  
Safavid  
Dated, probably 1601  
Steel, ivory, gold  
L: 35.7 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-410

241 Dagger  
Safavid, 18th century  
Steel, gold, silver, wood  
L: 35.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-66



242 Pair of Stirrups  
Iran  
Safavid, 16th century  
Brass  
H: 14.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-352





### 243 Three Galloping Horses

Iran  
Safavid, c.1550  
Watercolor on paper  
W: 22.0 cm (sheet), H: 13.7 cm (sheet),  
W: 13.2 cm (image), H: 10.1 cm (image)  
The British Museum  
BM 1930,0607.0.10

This painting depicts three galloping horses; a light chestnut, a black, and a grey. The horse in the foreground has a lasso around its neck that is knotted to the hind leg of the grey horse in the background. The lasso suggests that this page is from a manuscript of the *Shahnama* and depicts the capture of the stallion Rakash by Rustam.



### 244 Pair of Stirrups

Iran  
Safavid, 16th-17th century  
Steel, silver  
H: 14.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000376



### 245 Huqqa Vase

Islamic  
17th century  
Dia: 18.7 cm, H: 29.3 cm  
Polychrome underglaze pottery  
The British Museum  
BM 1890,0517.13

This vase is the base of a waterpipe (*qalyan*). It depicts a scene from the famous story in Persian literature of the Sassanian prince Khusrau first meeting his beloved, the Armenian princess Shirin, when he was out hunting on her swift horse.

### 246 Dish

Turkey  
Ottoman, second half of 17th century  
Earthenware; glazed  
Dia: 25.4 cm, H: 5.1 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Grinnell Collection, Bequest of William Milne Grinnell, 1920  
20.120.148

This Ottoman dish of pale blue, green and red-brown is decorated with a horseman carrying a mace. The horse is depicted with spots. While some spotted horses were found in the regions controlled by the Ottoman Empire, this is



perhaps an attempt to portray the dappled grey color common in the Arabian breed. Although several types of horses were used by the Ottomans, Arabian horses were highly favored. This horse displays several Arabian characteristics, including relatively small size, arched neck, high-carried tail, prancing gait, and small head and ears.

### 247 Bowl

Fars, Iran  
Islamic, 14th Century  
Dia: 23.7 cm, 11.8 cm  
Brass inlaid with silver and gold  
The British Museum  
BM 1881,0802.21

This fourteenth century bowl made of silver inlaid brass is engraved with courtly scenes and verses.





248 Helmet

India  
?Mughal, 17th - 18th century  
Steel  
Dia: 21.8 cm, H: 20.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000822

249 Helmet

Iran  
Timurid, 15th century  
Steel  
H: 28.0 cm, W: 22.0 cm  
(greatest)  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000816



250 Helmet

India  
Sind, 17th - 18th century  
Steel  
Dia: 21.8 cm, H: 20.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000824



252 Pair of Stirrups

Probably Italy  
19th century  
Steel, gold  
H: 16.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000348



253 Pair of Stirrups

Iran  
Probably 18th century  
Steel, silver, copper  
H: 21.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000346

251 Helmet

Turkey  
Ottoman, 16th century  
Steel, copper  
L: 28.0 cm, W: 22.0 cm  
(greatest)  
Inscribed: Sura 2: 255-6  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000808



### 255 Babur and His Army Emerge from the Khwaja Didar Fort from the Babumama Manuscript

India

Drawn by Basawan, painted by Dharm Das

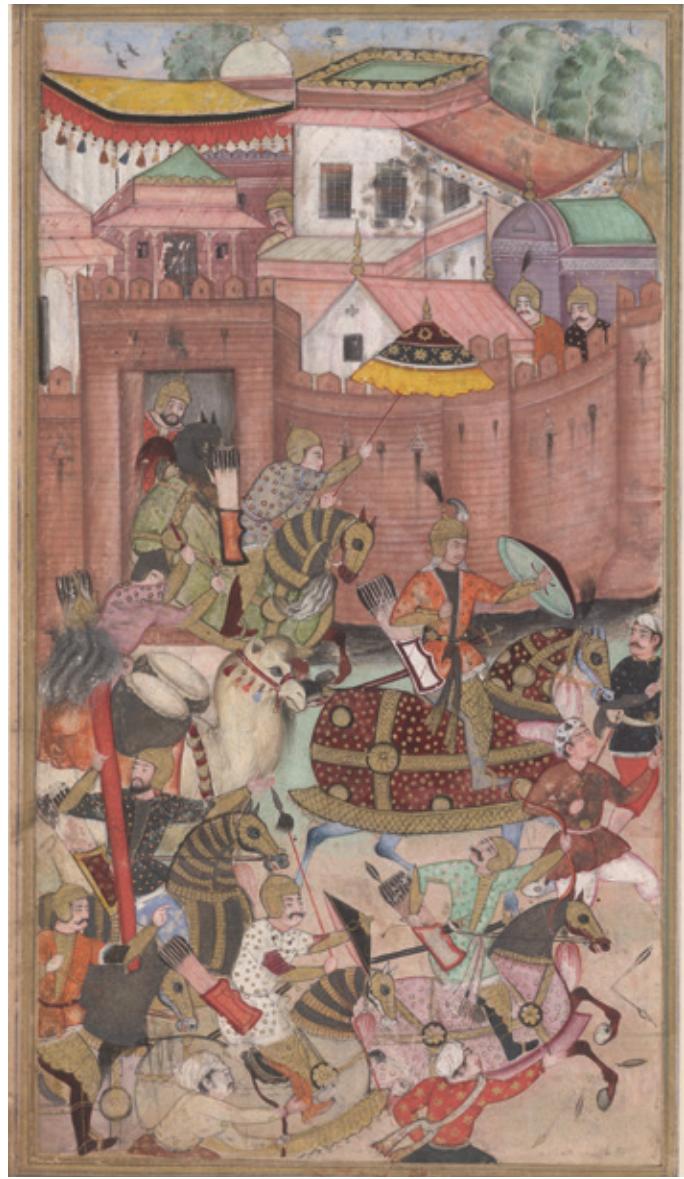
Mughal, Akbar reign, c. 1590

W: 15.3 cm (sheet), H: 26.5 cm (sheet), W: 12.9 cm (image), H: 23.4 cm (image)

The British Museum

BM 2000,0616.0.1

Babur is shown riding a fully armored horse, emerging with his cavalry from the Khwaja Didar fort, where he wintered in 1497. A drummer rides a camel behind him and another soldier leans forward to hold a parasol over Babur's head. The broken arrows in the left foreground indicate that the battle with Shaybani Khan the Uzbek has already begun. The fort is ringed with red brick walls and crenellated battlements. Inside a tomb with a vaulted roof, various buildings, pavilions, and canopies are visible. This is the left-hand page of a double-page composition of which the right-hand page represents Shaybani Khan and Uzbeks being driven toward Samarkand.



### 254 Baz Bahadur and Rupmati Riding Horses by Moonlight

India

Mughal, c. 1790

Painting on paper

W: 16.0 cm (image), H: 22.5 cm (image), W: 21.5 cm (with border),

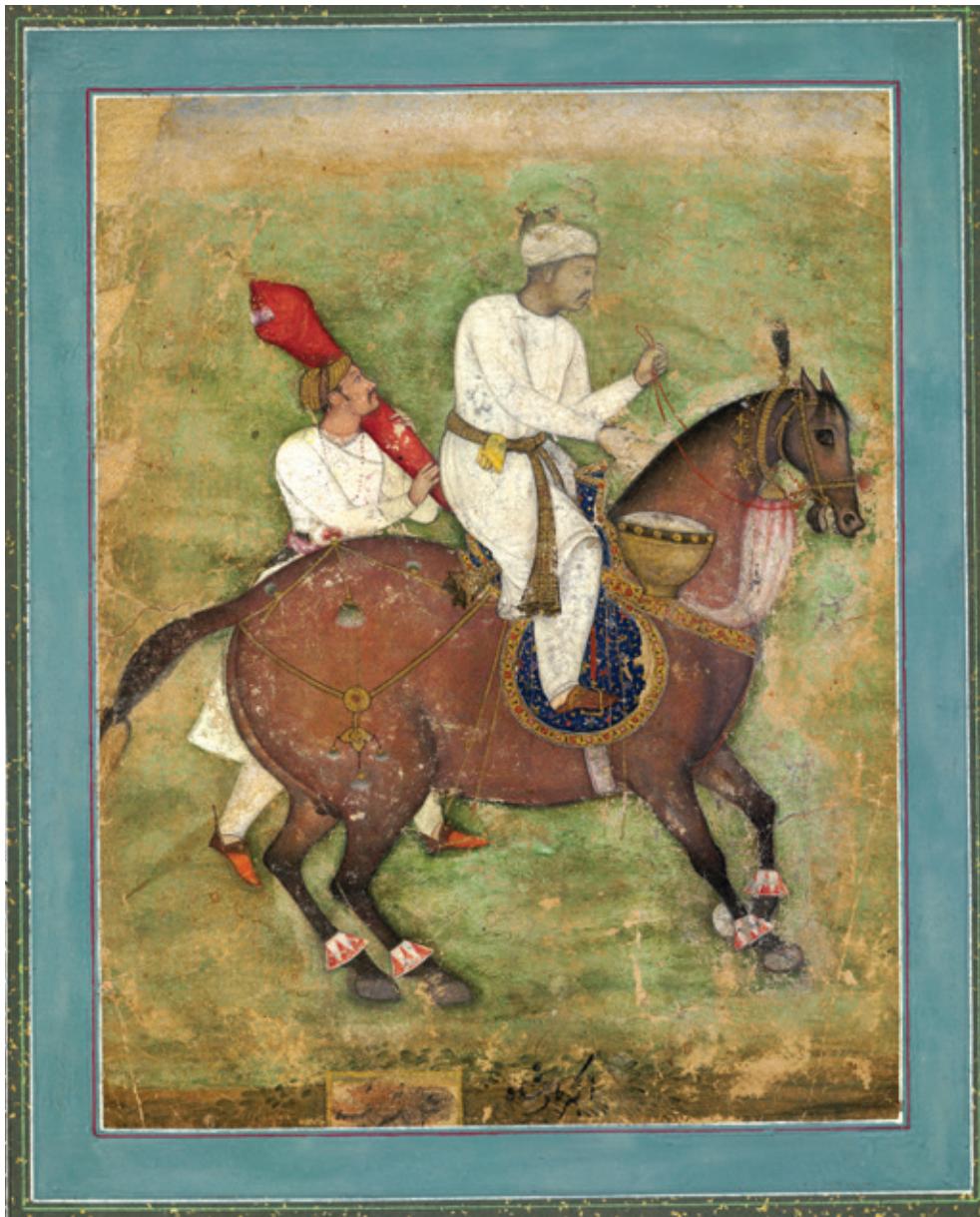
H: 28.5 cm (with border)

The British Museum

Br 1913,0617.0.3

Baz Bahadur, the last sultan of Malwa, reigned from 1555 to 1562. He was known for his devotion to the arts and to his paramour, Rupmati, a Rajput singer. In 1561, the army of the Mughal emperor Akbar attacked the Malwa Sultanate and defeated Baz Bahadur in the battle of Sarangpur. Rupmati is said to have poisoned herself upon hearing news of the defeat.

This romantic painting depicts Baz Bahadur and Rupmati gazing into each other's eyes as they ride their horses by moonlight. Baz Bahadur is mounted on a dapple-grey stallion wearing a bridle, breastplate with tie-down, crupper strap, and blanket with floral design. Rupmati's mount is a light chestnut or palomino color, and is wearing similar tack. Both horses have their hooves and lower legs decorated with henna, and the tail of Baz Bahadur's stallion also appears to have been dyed.



256 Emperor Akbar on Horseback with a Standard-Bearer

India

Mughal, c. 1580

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold leaf on paper  
W: 22.0 cm (sheet), H: 28.9 cm (sheet), W: 12.4 cm  
(image), H: 16.0 cm (image)

The British Museum  
BM 1948,1009.0.66

This painting is a portrait of the Mughal emperor Akbar on horseback accompanied by a standard bearer running at his side. The emperor has a falcon glove tucked into his sash and a hawking drum on the horse. His bay stallion is wearing a tail-badge and plume, and has anklets on all four legs. The crupper straps attached to the saddle are decorated with tassels and cross in the center in Mongol style. There is a signature inscribed on the painting in Persian: *Akbar Padhah. The work of Sharif.*



257 Khanjar

Mughal, 18th century  
Steel, agate, gold,  
rubies, emeralds

L: 35.1 cm  
Furusiyia Art  
Foundation  
R-00034



258 **Sword or Dagger Hilt in the Form of a Horse Head**

Mughal, 18th century

Ivory

L: 14.2 cm

Furusiyha Art Foundation

R-00028

The sword and dagger hilts during the Mughal era were often decorated with animal heads such as goats and camels, however, the horse was the most popular animal depicted. This ivory hilt has an intricately carved horse with individual teeth and mane hairs sculpted.



259 **Sword Hilt in the Form of a Mythical Beast and Hare**

Mughal, 18th - 19th century

Steel, gold, rubies, emeralds

L: 18.0 cm

Furusiyha Art Foundation

R-00031

This steel hilt decorated with gold is in the shape of a mythical beast holding the hind feet of a hare in its mouth. Rubies are inset in the eyes of both the beast and the hare. The front feet of the hare are balanced on one of the two tiger heads that form the quillon, and emeralds are inset in the eyes of the tigers.

260 **Dagger Hilt in the Form of a Horse Head**

Northern India

17th - 18th century

Brass

H: 14.5 cm

Furusiyha Art Foundation

R-00022

This brass dagger hilt is formed in the shape of a horse head. The horse is wearing a bridle with throatlatch and has its ears laid back. There is a band of decoration at the base of the hilt.



**261 Khanjar**  
Mughal, 18th century  
Steel, jade, gold, rubies, emeralds  
L: 43.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-00056

**262 Khanjar**  
Mughal, 18th century  
Steel, wood, jade, textile, gold, rubies, emeralds  
L: 39.5 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-00035

The jade hilt of this khanjar is set with foiled rubies and emeralds. The khanjar has a scrolled quillon block and rounded pommel.



**263 Saddle Axe**  
Northern India  
Mughal, 17th-18th century  
Steel, wood, velvet, gold, silver  
L: 60.5 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000119

The saddle ax (*tabarzarin*) differs from other axes since it is intended for use by a mounted rider. It was carried under the saddle flap and, like the mace, used in hand-to-hand combat. The head of this axe is decorated with gold, and the silver handle has a scrolled floral design.

**264 Saber**  
Blade: Ottoman;  
Hilt: India  
17th century  
Steel, gold, rubies, jade  
L: 96.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000297



265 War Axe

India  
Mughal, 18th century  
Steel, silver  
L: 58.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000131



267 Pair of Stirrups

India  
?Mughal, 18th century  
Brass  
H: 14.2 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000357



266 Pair of Stirrups

India  
?Mughal, 18th century  
Brass, lacquer  
H: 13.4 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000359



268 Saber

Northern India  
1691  
Steel, gold, silver, enamel  
L: 87.5 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000201

The date of 1691 is inscribed on this saber. It has an enameled hilt in the shape of a ram's head, with two smaller ram's heads on the quillon. The hilt is also decorated with various birds, elephants, and vegetal designs.



269 Cheekpiece

Mughal  
17th century  
Brass  
L: 12.2 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-370

This brass piece of equine equipment, probably a cheekpiece, is from the Mughal period and is decorated at either end with a ram's head.

270 Pair of Stirrups

India  
?Mughal, 18th century  
Brass, lacquer  
H: 13.3 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-362

271 Crupper Strap

Tatar  
17th century  
Gilded copper alloy, leather  
L: 86.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000696

272 Bridle and Crupper Strap Set

Tatar  
17th century  
Gilded copper alloy, textile, leather  
L (crupper strap): 86.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000695 a, b

This seventeenth century bridle and crupper set is decorated with intricately engraved links of gilded copper alloy. The browband has a central medallion with a floral pattern and suspended tassels. A neckband is attached to the bridle. The matching crupper strap is similarly decorated and also has a central medallion.



273 Illustrated  
Manuscript,  
*Folio Shahnama*  
(The Book of Kings)

India

Late 15th century  
Ink, colors and gold on paper

W: 19.7 cm, H: 26.3 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers  
Fund, 1913  
13.160.2

This folio is one of three pages  
in the collection from the same  
manuscript (see Cat. #274, 275)

The Shahnama is a poetic  
opus attributed to the Persian  
poet Ferdowsi that relates  
the mythical and historic  
history of Persia before the  
Islamic conquest. A mighty  
stallion named Rakhsh figures  
prominently in the work as  
the mount of the hero Rustam.  
Tamed as a young foal, he  
is loyal only to his master,  
allowing no one but Rustam to  
ride him. Rakhsh is described  
as a chestnut stallion of  
extraordinary strength and uses  
his intelligence and courage to  
defend Rustam in times of peril.

This folio depicts Rustam  
in the middle, flanked by  
horsemen on both sides,  
holding aloft the body of  
King Hamavarān. His stallion,  
Rakhsh, is wearing a striped  
and fringed blanket. The figures  
are set in a hilly landscape and  
additional figures of horsemen  
can be seen in the upper left of  
the painting.





**274 Illustrated Manuscript, Folio Shahnama (The Book of Kings)**

India

Late 15th century

W: 17.4 cm, H: 26.7 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913

13.160.5

This folio depicts Rustam capturing Rakhsh as a young foal from among a herd of horses. The other horses shown in this folio, a grey, bay, and black, are depicted as adult members of the herd. The grey mare or stallion behind Rakhsh appears to be attempting to protect the young foal from Rustam, as she is portrayed with ears back and teeth bared, typical equine behaviors of aggression.



**275 Illustrated Manuscript, Folio Shahnama (The Book of Kings)**

India

Late 15th century

W: 15.2 cm, H: 25.4 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913

13.160.6

In this folio Rakhsh is attacking a lion to protect his sleeping master, Rustam.



276 Hawking Drum

India  
16th century  
Copper alloy  
Dia: 22.8 cm  
Furusiyia Art Foundation  
R-000754

Hawking drums were used in falconry as a means to call for the return of the hunting bird. They were generally carried at the rider's side. This drum made of copper alloy is decorated with vegetal designs.



279 Hawking Drum and Detail

Iran  
16th century  
Copper alloy  
Dia: 28.5 cm  
Furusiyia Art Foundation  
R-000756



277 Hawking Drum

Iran or India  
16th - 17th century  
Copper alloy?  
Dia: 22.2 cm  
Furusiyia Art Foundation  
R-757



278 Hawking Drum

Iran  
17th century  
Steel  
Dia: 31.2 cm  
Furusiyia Art Foundation  
R-000759



280 **Helmet**

Tatar  
13th - 14th century  
Steel  
H: 22 cm, D: 23.5 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000660



282 **Powder Flask**

Iran or Turkey  
17th - 18th century  
Ivory, steel  
H: 17.4 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000724

A number of accessories were required for the use of early firearms. These included powder flasks to transport gunpowder and keep it dry. There were considerable differences in shape and decoration of powder flasks throughout the Islamic world. This curved powder flask is made of ivory and fitted with steel.



281 **Powder Flask**

Turkey or Caucasus  
18th century  
Wood, shagreen, ivory, brass  
H: 24.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000291



283 **Pair of Stirrups**

India  
18th century  
Brass  
H: 11.2 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000363



### 284 Pair of Stirrups

?North Africa  
18th - 19th century  
Steel, silver, turquoise  
H: 18.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-338

This pair of stirrups, probably from North Africa, has a slightly arched foot with shaped attachment loops. The sides of the stirrups are patterned and inset with turquoise stones.



### 286 Pair of Stirrups

India  
17th century  
Steel  
H: 9.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000368



### 285 Pair of Stirrups

?North Africa  
18th - 19th century  
Steel, silver, turquoise  
H: 18.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-339



### 287 Mail Shirt

India  
18th century  
Steel, textile  
H: 80.0 cm, W: 148.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000938



### 288 Pair of Stirrups

North Africa  
19th century  
Silver-plated metal, colored beads,  
turquoise  
L: 5.91 cm, H: 13.0 cm  
Emile Hermès Collection  
EH-OOEQ-3-36

These stirrups made of silver-plated metal have a slightly arched footplate pierced with a small design, and a square attachment loop at the top. The triangular sides, top, and attachment loop of the stirrups have an engraved arabesque design inset with colored beads and turquoise.

chase and avoid the members of the opposing team. Arabian horses were often preferred mounts because of their greater agility than larger breeds.

Several of the Ottoman sultans were known to be avid *jerid* players and this set of *jerids* bears the calligraphic seal (*tugrā*) of Mustafa III.



### 290 Pair of Spurs

North Africa  
19th century  
Steel inlaid with colored beads  
L: 27.5 cm, W: 8.0 cm  
Emile Hermès Collection  
EH-OOEQ-4-3

This type of spur, commonly found in North Africa, has a single long point rather than a rowel, and a brace is attached to the shank. This pair is made of steel and is decorated with inlaid colored beads in a circular design.

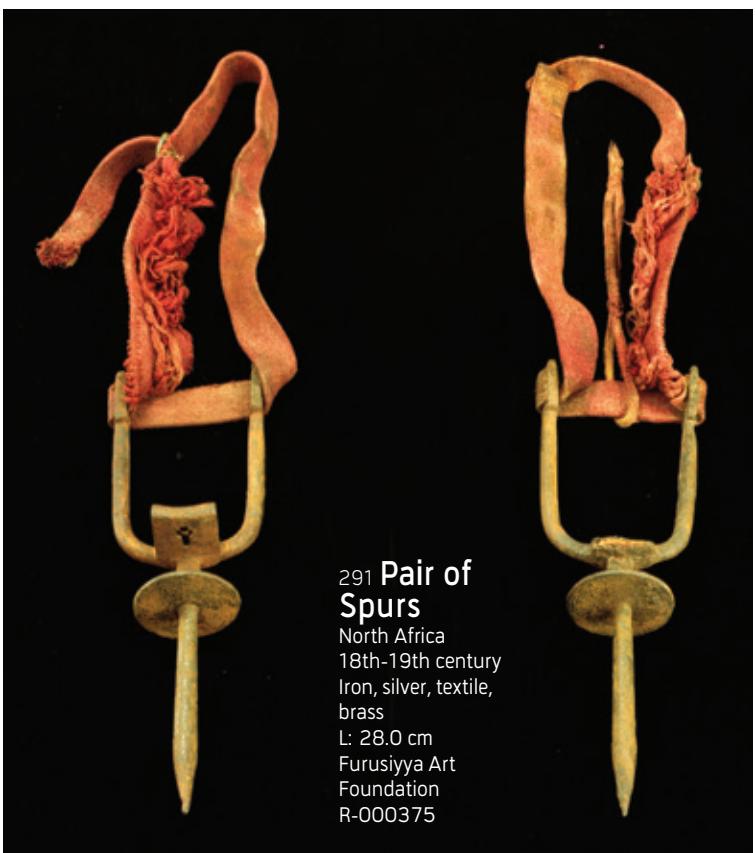


### 289 Throwing Darts (Jerids)

Ottoman  
1757-1774 (*tugrā* of Mustafa III)  
Steel, silver, wood, velvet  
L: 58.9 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000180

*Jerid* was an important military and ceremonial game thought to have been brought to the Islamic world by the Turkic peoples as they migrated west from Central Asia. This game was particularly important in the Ottoman Empire where it was both a court sport as well as a means to improve the skills of the cavalry.

The wooden javelin, also known as a *jerid*, is carried by teams of horsemen and thrown at the opponent. The game requires skill and superb horsemanship as the riders



### 291 Pair of Spurs

North Africa  
18th-19th century  
Iron, silver, textile,  
brass  
L: 28.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art  
Foundation  
R-000375



### 292 Dagger

Turkey or Syria  
Ottoman  
Early 19th century  
Steel, gold, jade, silver, turquoise, copper,  
wood, enamel  
L: 36.3 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-000324

The hilt of this dagger is jade and both the hilt and blade are decorated with gold. The scabbard is elaborately enameled with flowers and floral sprays in pink, blue, green, and orange on a white background.



### 294 Royal Saber

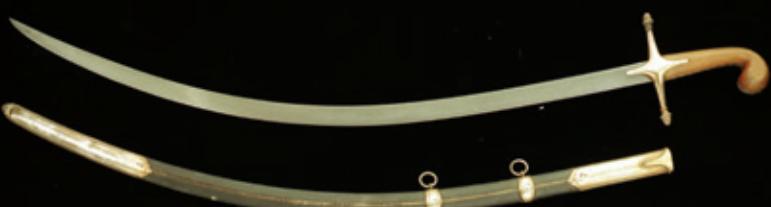
Ottoman, scabbard with tuğrā of  
?Abdulhamid II, 1876-1918  
Steel, rhinoceros horn, wood, silver  
L: 94.6 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-701



### 295 Royal Saber

Ottoman  
18th century  
Steel, jade, gold, precious gems  
L: 95.0 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-000841

Sabers were the weapon of preference for the mounted warrior throughout the Islamic world. They were often elaborately decorated as symbols of status and rank. Muslim sabers were especially known for the fine quality of their watered steel, and at the time of the Crusades the Europeans discovered that the



### 293 Khanjar

Ottoman  
18th century  
Steel, gold, silver, jade, glass, wood  
L: 23.5 cm  
Furusiyah Art Foundation  
R-000327

blades of the Muslim knights were vastly superior to their own. It is therefore common to find Ottoman or Persian blades fitted with European hilts.

This eighteenth century royal saber has a hilt made of jade and a chased and gold engraved blade. The quillon has shaped tips and a raised rosette in the center, and the entire surface is inset with precious gems. Precious gems also decorate the scabbard in the form of stars and roundels on an engraved gold arabesque design.



296 Saber Blade (detail)

Ottoman  
19th century  
Steel, gold  
L: 91.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000237



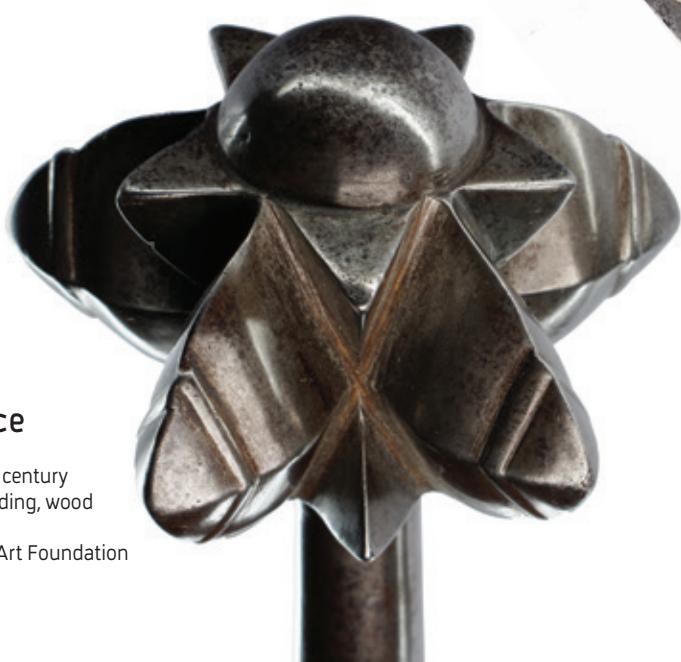
297 Saber Blade

Ottoman  
17th-18th century  
Steel, gold  
L: 87.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000238



298 Yataghan

Ottoman  
17th-18th century  
Steel, ivory, silver, brass, horn  
L: 92.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000276

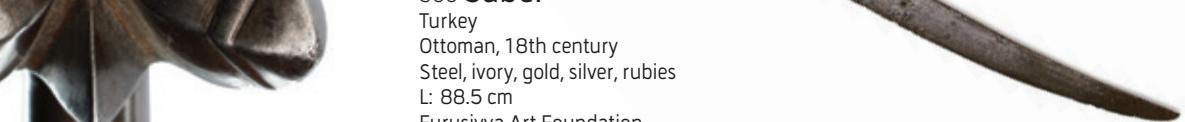


299 Mace

Ottoman  
17th-18th century  
Copper, gilding, wood  
L: 94.2 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000715

300 Saber

Turkey  
Ottoman, 18th century  
Steel, ivory, gold, silver, rubies  
L: 88.5 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000245





### 301 Saddle Blanket

Turkey  
18th century  
Velvet, gold and silver enriched brocade  
L: 185.0 cm, W: 118.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000788

This eighteenth century Turkish saddle blanket is rectangular with the hind part widening to form a trapezium. It is made of velvet with gold and silver brocade decorated with large fruit and foliage designs. The blanket has a border design with a vine motif along the edges.

### 302 Saddle, Stirrups and Bridle Set

Turkestan and Ottoman  
17th century  
Ebony, ivory, leather, steel, copper alloy, gilding  
L: 38.0 cm, H: 36.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000792



### 303 Saddle Blanket

Turkey or Boukhara  
18th century  
Velvet, brocade  
L: 172.0 cm, W: 135.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000789



#### 304 Saddle

Ottoman

2nd half of the 17th century  
Birchwood, birch bark, leather, goat hair,  
brass, linen, silk, silver wire, gold plated  
silver thread, silk velvet, cotton thread,  
silver plate, gold-plated silver cord  
Saddle tree: L: 41.0 cm, W: 30.0 cm, H:  
(pommel) 37.3 cm  
Sides Leaves: H: 27.0 cm, W: 28.7 cm  
Flaps: H: 32.5 cm, W: 43.5 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
D162

This elaborate seventeenth century Ottoman saddle has a wooden tree covered with reddish brown leather. The seat, side, and flaps are covered with purple silk velvet. Stylized tulips decorate the sides and flaps which are bordered along the outer edge with an inward facing frieze, also of stylized tulips. The pommel and cantle ends are covered with ornate gilded silver plate.

#### 305 Reflex Bow

Made by Hussein Mehmed  
Ottoman  
c. 1681-1682  
L: 119.0 cm, W: 42.0 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum  
Karlsruhe  
D90f

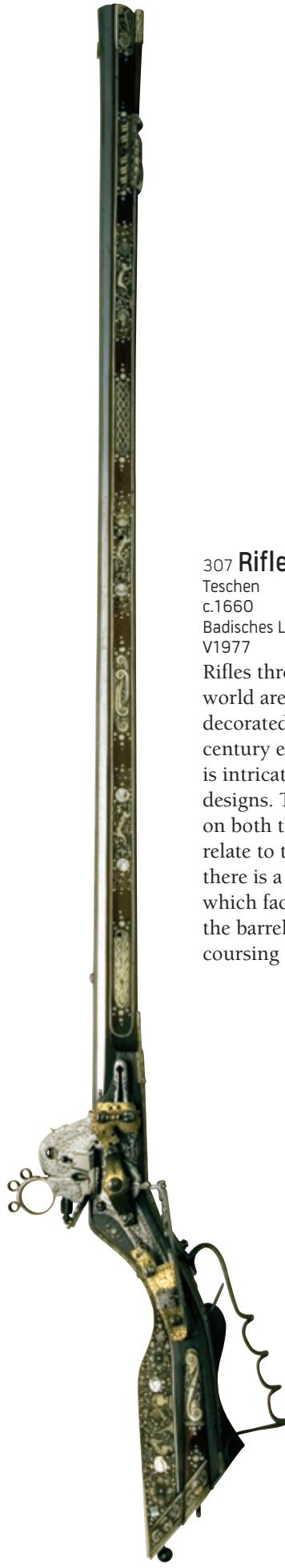
The Ottoman archers were highly skilled and their arrows had a range of several hundred meters. Their rate of fire was also extremely high, and the best archers could fire twenty to thirty arrows in one minute. This seventeenth century reflex bow is signed with the name of the maker, Hussein Mehmed.



#### 306 Pair of Stirrups

Ottoman or Venetian  
16th century  
Steel, silver  
H: 18.0 cm  
Furusiyha Art Foundation  
R-000335

These stirrups have wide triangular sides with ovular attachment loops. The square base is pierced with a six-point star arabesque. This style is typical of the sixteenth century, although there is some disagreement as to whether its origin is Moorish, Venetian, or Ottoman.



### 307 Rifle and Detail

Teschen  
c.1660

Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
V1977

Rifles throughout the Islamic world are often heavily decorated, and this seventeenth century example from Teschen is intricately inlaid with various designs. The animals depicted on both the stock and barrel relate to the hunt. On the stock there is a hare and a gazelle which face each other, and on the barrel there are two hounds coursing a hare.



### 308 Pistol

Probably Ottoman (barrel and stock)  
Barrel: First half of the 18th century  
Lock: Second half of the 18th century  
(Germany, made by Leopold Becher,  
Karlsbad)  
Stock: Second half of the 18th century  
(Bohemia)  
Steel, gold wire, silver wire, iron, walnut  
wood, gilt brass, wood  
L: 47.0 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
G 645

This pistol, one of a pair, was described in the inventory of the German gunsmith as originally being of Turkish origin prior to being refitted in Germany. The original decoration on the pistol includes damascened gold and silver. The newer lock plate is decorated with two galloping horsemen wielding sabers in a landscape with trees, houses and tents. The pistol has gold-plated brass fittings, including a pommel in the shape of a bird's head.



### 309 Bow and Arrow Quivers

Ottoman  
Late 17th century  
Leather, velvet, wood, silver plate  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
D94 and D98

The Ottoman archers wore their quivers at their girdles, with the bow quiver on the left side and the arrow quiver on the right. This set of quivers match in materials and décor, and are cut from one piece of leather. Both sides are lined with thin leather, and the fronts are covered with blue velvet. The quivers have decorative hardware made of engraved silver plate. Designs include a large raised rosette and gilded floral scrolls.

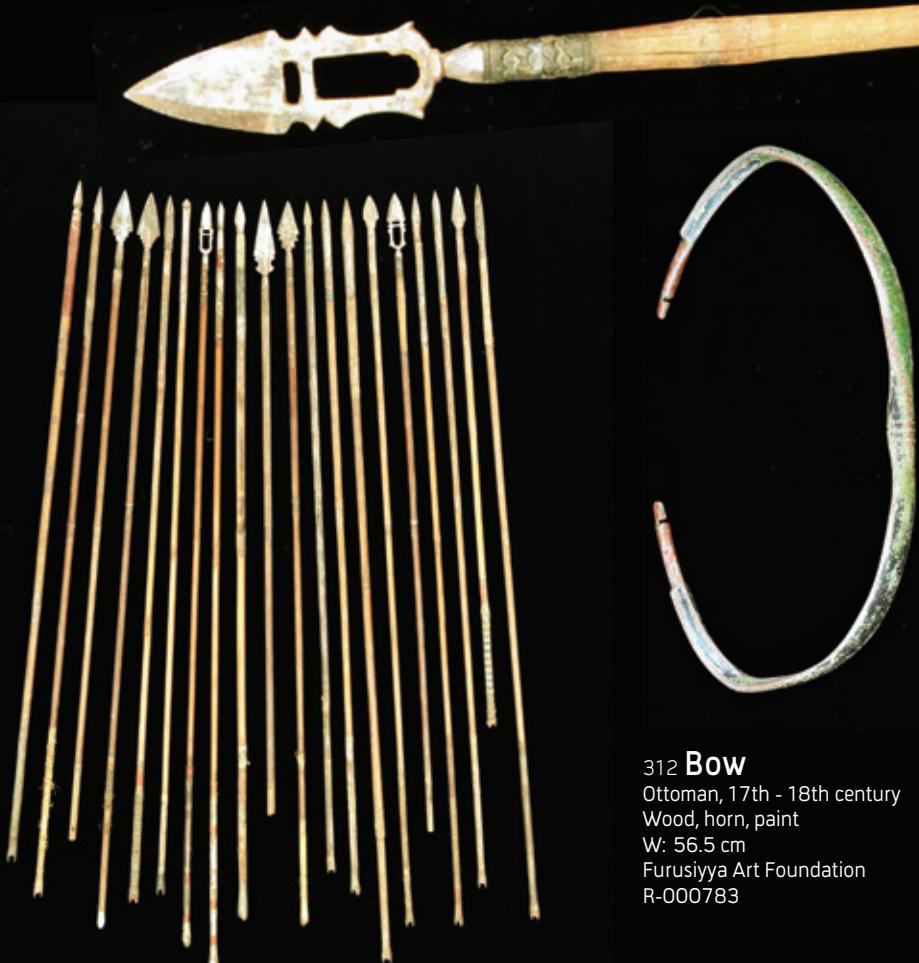
### 310 Quiver

Ottoman  
17th - 18th century  
Wood  
L: 68.5 cm, W: 12.0 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000773



### 311 A Group of Arrows

Turkey or India  
17th - 18th century  
Reed, steel, textile  
L: 30.0 cm  
(average)  
Furusiyya Art  
Foundation  
R-000781



### 312 Bow

Ottoman, 17th - 18th century  
Wood, horn, paint  
W: 56.5 cm  
Furusiyya Art Foundation  
R-000783



### 313 Lance with Pennant

Ottoman  
17th century  
Fir wood, iron  
L: 325.0,  
Dia: 1.9-2.4 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
DI



### 314 Flask

Ottoman  
c. 1691  
Leather, ramie, silver and gold plated  
wire, silk, silver, silver gilt  
H: 25.7 cm, W: 16.0 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
D230

Flasks were the typical means of storing drinking water for the Ottoman military, and the quality of their decoration reflected rank and status. This flask is covered with intricate embroidery of silver and gold-plated thread to form a delicate floral and vine pattern.





### 315 Wawrzyniec Fredro in the Embassy to Istanbul in 1500

Juliusz Kossak

1883

Watercolor on paper

H: 48.0 cm, W: 69.0 cm

National Museum of Warsaw

Rys. Pol. 11425

This watercolor by Juliusz Kossak depicts Wawrzyniec Fredro entering Istanbul in 1500 in his role as Polish ambassador to the Sublime Porte during the reign of Sultan Bayazid II. Kossak masterfully captures the drama of this historical moment, and his painting includes colorful details of the variety of peoples entering the city along with the Polish entourage. The ambassador is resplendent in his golden robes, wearing a turban topped with ostrich plumes and carrying a mace at his side. His magnificent white Arabian horse is adorned with a flowing golden blanket from chest to tail. Of the figures in the painting, only the ambassador looks outward toward the viewer, and his noble horse echoes his gaze.



### 316 Saddle Blanket

Ottoman

2nd half of 17th century

Silk, silk velvet, Silberlahn gold-plated,

gilt copper, iron, cotton, leather, felt

L: 142.0 cm, W: 81.0 cm, H: 74.0 cm

Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe

D116

This side of an Ottoman saddle blanket is from the second half of the seventeenth century. It is covered in dark red silk velvet over three layers of felt that are padded and lined in the back with red cotton fabric. The bottom has a narrow band

of braided weaving of white and beige silk with tassels of red silk. Embossed and gilded copper plaques arranged in a repeating pattern of diamond-shaped stylized leaves decorate the side of the blanket.



### 317 Bridle

Ottoman

2nd half of the 17th century

Leather, silver gilt

Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe

D133

This seventeenth century Ottoman bridle has flake silver gilt decorative fittings covering

the headstall, browband, and noseband. The browband originally had several crescent moon-shaped pendants with floral designs, and one remains. The noseband also has a large central crescent-shaped pendant and one remaining smaller pendant. The silver gilt fittings that cover the bridle are also intricately decorated.



### 318 Saddle Blanket

Ottoman  
c. 1687

Wood, leather, felt, silk, velvet  
embroidered with gold and silver thread  
L: 150.5 cm, W: 82.0 cm, H: 75.0 cm  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
D117

This saddle blanket is one side of three pieces of horse armor that are joined together to protect the front and sides of the horse. Made of heavy felt and cloth covered with silk, it is decorated with elaborate silver gilt and silver plaques in the form of hexagrams, leaves, pomegranate shapes, stars and palmettes. Captured from the Ottomans at the Siege of Vienna, the silver is stamped in several places with the tuğrā of Sultan Mehmet IV.

### 319 Stirrup

Ottoman  
2nd half of the 17th century  
Copper, gold plated, engraved  
H: 13.3 cm  
L: 18.0 cm (footplate)  
L: 21.0 cm (loops)  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
D168 a

The square shape of this type of stirrup was created specifically to fit the broad shoes of the Ottoman riders. This gold plated stirrup (one of a pair) is engraved with an arabesque pattern. The stirrup leather is red-brown with two layers of five blue silk braided lines.





### 320 Bridle

Ottoman  
2nd half of 17th century  
Leather, silver gilt  
Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe  
D134

This bridle, reins, and headstall set made of leather with silver gilt rosette fittings was used by the Ottoman Turks in the second half of the seventeenth century. Elaborate tack was a sign of status for the Muslim horsemen, and the decorative fittings of this set illustrate the unique art of Ottoman goldsmithing. The bridle has a large pendant and four smaller pendants, all of open metalwork, suspended from the browband. There is a large central pendant decorated with floral forms that is secured by four chains and has three small pendants similar to those on the browband suspended from the bottom. The noseband of the bridle has matching suspended small pendants and the throatlatch ends in a large tassel. The breastplate has similar fittings.



### 321 Akerf

Victor Adam  
c. 1850, printed by Godard, published by Tessari, Paris  
Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
H: 42.0 cm, W: 57.0 cm (unframed sheet)  
H: 32.8 cm, W: 40.5 cm (image)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

Victor Adam (1801-66) was a master of lithography and produced many important portraits of influential Arabian horses from royal and national studs. He often depicted the horses in desert settings and many examples of his work highlighted the close relationship between the Arabs and their horses. The exceptionally beautiful horses portrayed by Adam have become standards of classic type within the Arabian breed.



### 322 Nijid

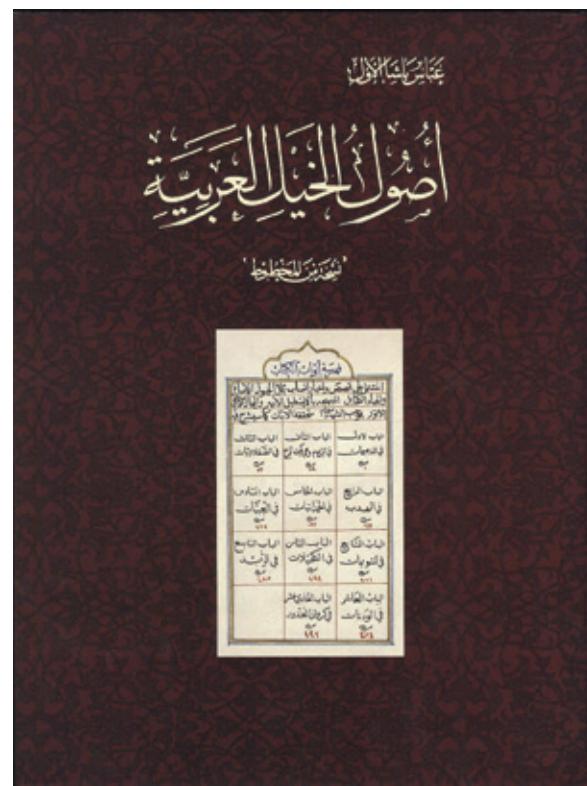
Victor Adam  
c. 1850, printed by Godard, published by Tessari, Paris  
Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
H: 42.0 cm, W: 57.0 cm (unframed sheet)  
H: 32.8 cm, W: 40.5 cm (image)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme



323 Ibrahim Pasha

Victor Adam  
c. 1850, printed by Lemercier, Paris  
Chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
H: 55.0 cm, W: 45.0 cm (framed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

Ibrahim Pasha, son of the Viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, was the leader of a campaign in Arabia against the al-Sauds in the mid-nineteenth century and captured many of their finest horses as spoils of war. It is said that, despite being their enemy, Ibrahim came to admire the culture of the Arabs. The same was true of his nephew, Abbas Pasha, whose passion for the horses of Arabia inspired him to create one of the greatest studs in history.



324 Abbas Pasha Manuscript

Egypt  
19th century  
H: 27.0 cm, W: 19.5 cm (closed), H: 27.0 cm, W: 39.0 cm (open)  
King Abdul Aziz Public Library  
2513

Abbas Pasha I, Viceroy of Egypt from 1848-54, assembled one of the greatest collections of Arabian horses in history. Fond of horses since his youth, he was also a great admirer of the Bedouin peoples and, in particular, their purebred horses. He was tireless in his quest to obtain the finest horses in Arabia, and was also determined to learn as much as possible about them. The stories and genealogies of the Arabian horse had been preserved through generations of oral history, but never in written form. Therefore, Abbas Pasha sent his emissaries throughout Arabia to speak with the breeders there and record their knowledge of their horses. Once the information was gathered, Abbas Pasha's chief scribe compiled the handwritten accounts into a series of manuscripts.

The *Abbas Pasha Manuscript* is widely considered to be the most important document in the world relating to the histories and strains of the Arabian horse.

**شیل خالد بن حنبل** و **وریث** **حیی** **الاصم** من خطاب  
بمنور خلف الشهرين قطان و **عبد الله بن موسى** و **نافع**  
بن عبيدة و **خالد** بن منج **الجع** من العاص من قطان و **الملحق**  
**باب مجلس** **عن الدکتور** شیوان و شیاعت افادا خالد المکورات  
الادمه شوام من شیاعت الشیوان و **ویصل** **بریزات** و **اقدم**  
ایلول الیوجه و **لاکفم** **قط** و **التدریت** من شیوان **ایلول**  
من قطان و **التدریت** من الرغوری **کیمیر** **البلیس** من الجافت  
و **انتعل** **الرسن** **من الرغوری** **ایلول** **کیمیر** **کیمیر**  
شقق علی ابویاضرین و **وریث** و **بنت** **کیمیر** **البرھان**  
ابن شاعر من قطان و **اویل** **شیاعت** **هان** و **دهمان** **شیاعت**  
دهیان **تھیر** **حسان** **الضاھی** و **جوابات** **و** **ویضات**  
کیمیان **کیمیر** **حسان** **کیمیر** **قطان** و **جوابات** **حسان** **اشعر**  
و **یدع** **لیثیا** **هند** **تفہم** **ایم** **وحات** **ستن** **شیعات**  
من دلهما **ویچو** **روج** **ویارت** **حسان** **شیعات** **شیعات**  
و **غفره** **ایم** **جلاد** **من** **من** **خیز** **و** **شیعات** **ام** **کیمیر** **لیون**

**325 Massoud**

Edward Troye  
1854  
Oil on canvas  
H: 92.7 cm, W: 121.9 cm

A. Keene Richards of Kentucky holds the distinction of being the first American to personally travel to the Near East to select Arabian bloodstock for importation to the United States. On his second trip to the region he was accompanied by his friend, the artist Edward Troye. Troye (1808-74) was born in Switzerland, but later immigrated to the United States and eventually moved to Kentucky where he became well-known for his masterful portraits of horses. This painting depicts Richard's Arabian stallion Mokladi with his Syrian groom, Yusef Bedra.

**326 Mokladi**

Edward Troye  
1854  
Oil on canvas  
H: 92.7 cm, W: 121.9 cm

This painting by Edward Troye depicts A. Keene Richards in Arab dress holding Mokladi, one of the purebred Arabians he imported in his efforts to improve the bloodlines of American Thoroughbreds.



327 **Portrait of Count  
Waclaw Rzewuski**

Kazimierz Źwan

1825

Oil on canvas

H: 55.0 cm, W: 45.0 cm

National Museum of Warsaw

MP 5172

Count Waclaw Rzewuski (1785-1831) journeyed throughout the Near East beginning in 1818, and later traveled to the interior of the Arabian Peninsula where he lived and fought alongside the Bedouin. Rzewuski was passionate about Arabian horses and carefully studied the horse breeding practices of the tribes. He procured over one hundred horses from the Near East and Arabia, several of which eventually went to the Weil Stud in Germany. By 1830, after his return to Poland, he owned eighty purebred mares of great quality, more than any other individual breeder in Europe at that time.

Rzewuski's detailed three-volume manuscript, entitled *Sur les Chevaux Orientaux et provenants des Races Orientales*, is housed in the Polish National Library and is a chronicle of his time in Arabia. This manuscript is unique in many regards and includes hundreds of pages of detailed drawings, history, geography, and ethnographic material, as well as his personal observations of the Bedouin and their horses.



### 328 Ghost Portrait

Eric Kennington

Pastel on paper

L: 46.4 cm, W: 38.1 cm

All Souls College

The artist Eric Kennington (1888-1960) was a close friend of T.E. Lawrence. Primarily known for his sculptures, Kennington was chosen by Lawrence to illustrate *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. He also sculpted several busts of Lawrence, including one in the crypt at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, as well as an effigy that is located at St Martin's Church in Wareham, Dorset.

In the book *T.E. Lawrence by His Friends*, Kennington wrote of Lawrence, "He stayed higher on another plane of life. It was easy to become his slave. These crystal eyes were almost animal, yet with a complete human understanding."

### 329 Thob (Inner Robe)

Silk

L: 142.2 cm, w: 129.6 cm

All Souls College

This Arabic-style ankle-length white shirt with wrist-length sleeves (*thob*) is decorated at the collar and front with gold embroidery. It belonged to T.E. Lawrence who generally dressed in Arab style during his time in the Near East. This mode of dress was originally the suggestion of Amir Faisal, as indicated by Lawrence in Chapter XX of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. He wrote, "Suddenly

Feisal [Faisal] asked me if I would wear Arab clothes like his own while in camp. I should find it better for my own part, since it was a comfortable dress in which to live Arab-fashion as we must do."

Lawrence preferred wearing a *thob* of white silk, and in Chapter XCIX of the same book he wrote, "It was notoriety to be the only cleanshaven one, and I doubled it by wearing always the suspect pure silk, of the whitest (at least outside), with a gold and crimson Meccan head-rope, and gold dagger."



**330 Head Cloth and 'Iqal**

Syria  
L: 152.4 cm, W: 152.4 cm  
All Souls College

T.E. Lawrence bought this head dress in Aleppo on June 24, 1912 as a present for Haj Wahid, the expedition cook at Carchemish who lived with his family in a house near the one occupied by Lawrence and Leonard Woolley.

**331 Dagger with Scabbard and Belt**

Saudi Arabia  
Leather, Gold, Steel  
L: 22.8 cm (dagger) L: 78.5 cm (belt)  
All Souls College

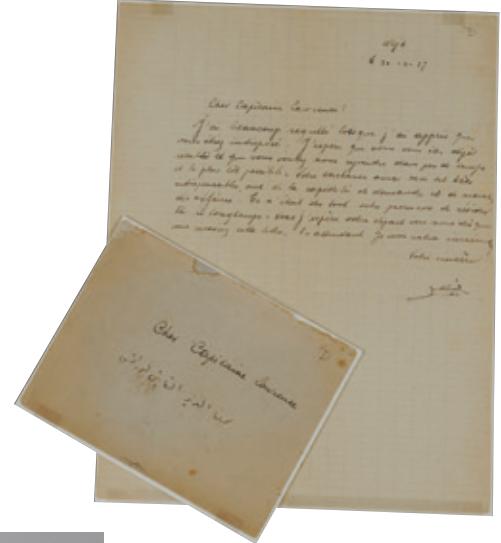
This dagger was acquired by T.E. Lawrence in 1917. Lawrence refers to the dagger in a letter to Sydney Cockerell on May 27, 1927, writing that it was made in Mecca "by an old Nejdi goldsmith whose name I fancy was Gaesin." Lawrence preferred small weapons because he found large weapons cumbersome.



**332 Box For Head Cloth and 'Iqal**

All Souls College

This box was custom made for T.E. Lawrence by Sir Herbert Baker and Lawrence Turner. Sir Herbert Baker, the British architect responsible for many buildings in England, South Africa, and India, provided Lawrence with a room above his office in Westminster, in which much of the work on *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was completed.



**333 Letter from Feisal**

W: 21.0 cm, H: 27.0 cm  
All Souls College

Amir Faisal bin al-Hussein, the third son of the Arab Revolt's catalyst, Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca, was an ally of T.E. Lawrence's throughout the course of the Arab revolt and afterwards during postwar negotiations. Amir Faisal was King of Greater Syria for a brief period, and King of Iraq from 1921-33.

This letter, written in imperfect French, is from Amir Faisal [Emir Feisal] to T. E. Lawrence, and reads:

"I was very sorry to learn that you were ill. I hope that you are already better and that you would like to come back to us in a short time, as soon as possible. Your presence with me is very indispensable, in view of urgency of questions and the pace of affairs. It was not at all you promise to stay there so long. So I hope that you will return as soon as you receive this letter."

### 334 Sandals

Leather  
All Souls College

These leather sandals were worn by T.E. Lawrence during his time in the Near East. In Chapter XXXV of his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence refers to the use of sandals to protect against the heat of the desert floor. He wrote: "The day seemed to be hotter and hotter: the sun drew close, and scorched us without intervening air. The clean, sandy soil was so baked that my bare feet could not endure it, and I had to walk in sandals, to the amusement of the Juheina, whose thick soles were proof even against slow fire."



### 335 Silver Plate, Bowl and Spoon

Saudi Arabia  
Silver  
Dia: 22.0 cm (bowl)  
All Souls College

This silver bowl was made for T.E. Lawrence in Jidda, Saudi Arabia. He refers to its use in Chapter CXVIII of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*:

"By the charred hangars my guards, fickle-surfaced as the sea, squabbled after their wont; and there to-night for the last time Abdulla brought me cooked rice in the silver bowl. After supping, I tried in the blankness to think forward: but my mind was a blank, my dreams puffed out like candles by the strong wind of success. In front was our too-tangible goal: but behind lay the effort of two years, its misery forgotten or glorified."



### 336 Rodania

Peter Upton  
Watercolor on paper  
H: 30.5 cm, W: 40.6 cm  
Collection of the Artist

Lady Anne Blunt, along with her husband Wilfrid Blunt, traveled throughout the Near East in the late 1870s in a quest for purebred Arabian horses, and founded the Crabbet Stud in England based upon the horses they imported. The Crabbet Stud, continued by the Blunts' daughter, Lady Wentworth, had a profound impact on Arabian horse breeding throughout the world.

This portrait, by artist and Arabian horse historian Peter Upton, depicts the mare Rodania, imported to England by the Blunts in 1881. Foaled in 1869, Rodania was bred by Ibn Rodan of the Ruala tribe, and founded a dam line that remains highly influential in modern Arabian horses. A famous war mare in the desert, she was reputedly the cause of a feud between the Bedouin, and bore scars attesting to her courage in battle.



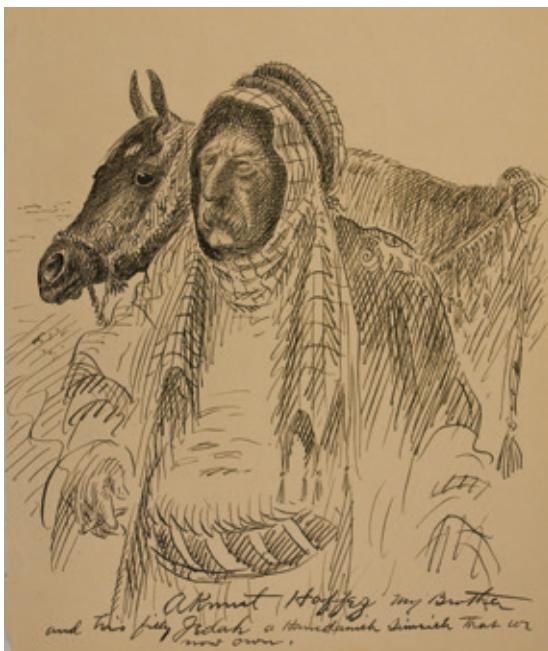
### 337 Shahwan

Peter Upton  
Watercolor on paper  
H: 30.5 cm, W: 40.6 cm  
Collection of the Artist

This painting depicts the stallion Shahwan, bred by Ali Pasha Sherif in Egypt and purchased there by the Blunts in 1892. Wilfrid Blunt wrote of him, "Shahwan was a splendid type of white Arab, very beautiful and very powerful."<sup>1</sup>

A prize winner in England, Shahwan was later purchased by J.A.P. Ramsdell and imported to the United States where he also was shown and created further interest in the Arabian breed.

<sup>1</sup> Upton, Peter. *The Arab Horse*. Manchester. 2006. p. 185.



### 338 Akmet Haffez

Homer Davenport

Pencil and ink on paper

1906

H: 34.9 cm, W: 26.7 cm

International Museum of the Horse

Donated by the Purebred Arabian Trust  
2008.001.289d

Homer Davenport (1867-1912) was a well-known American political cartoonist who, with the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, obtained authorization from the Ottoman sultan to travel to Syria to obtain purebred Arabian horses. During his trip in 1906 he made many sketches of the people and horses he encountered. This sketch depicts Ahmed Haffez, an Anazeh sheikh who was the liaison between the Bedouin and the Ottoman government. Because Davenport chose to visit Sheikh Haffez before paying his regards to the Governor of Syria, Haffez felt so honored that he bequeathed Davenport his famed war mare Wadudda. Davenport considered Haffez his "Bedouin brother" and Haffez assisted him in procuring twenty-seven Arabian horses from the desert. These horses became an important influence in American Arabian horse breeding.



### 339 Sheikh Ali

Homer Davenport

Pencil and ink on paper

1907

H: 57.2 cm, W: 49.5 cm

International Museum of the Horse

Donated by the Purebred Arabian Trust  
2008.001.193

### 340 Halchem Bey – Sheikh of the Anazeh

Homer Davenport

Pencil and ink on paper

1906

H: 34.9 cm, W: 26.7 cm

International Museum of the Horse

Donated by the Purebred Arabian Trust  
2008.001.289





**341 Book of Original Sketches of the Arabian Horses of the King of Würtemberg**

Germany  
F. Keutzer

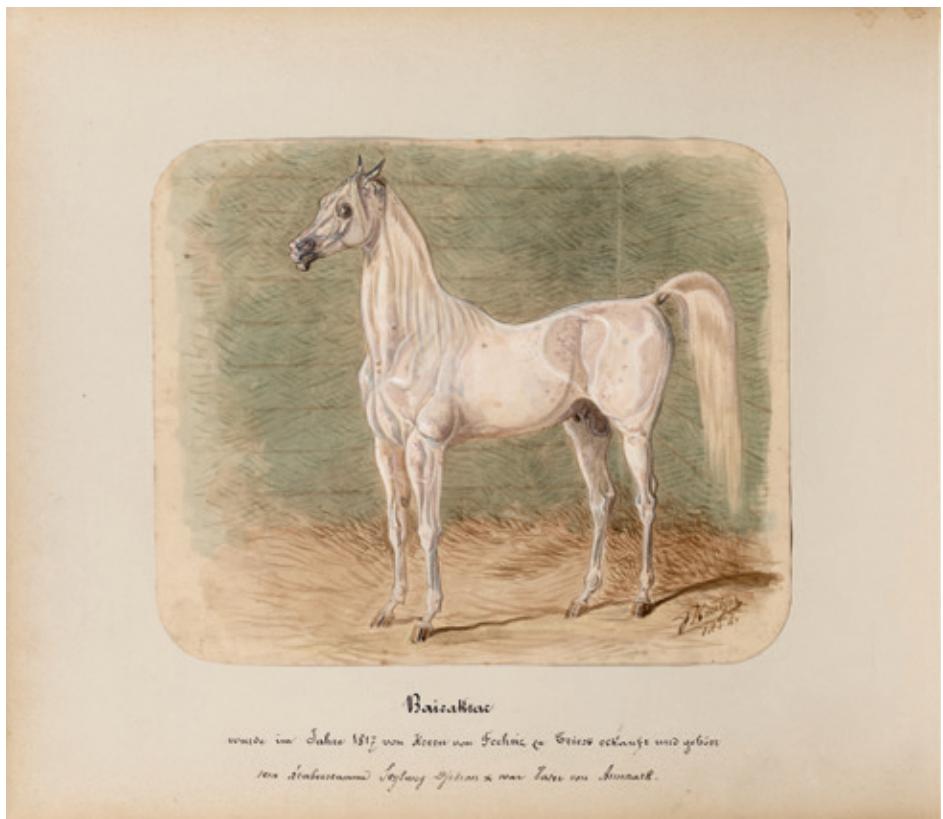
1858

Watercolor on paper, gouache  
H: 30.2 cm, W: 37.5 cm, H: 4.0 cm  
(closed)

Emile Hermès Collection  
EH-OO-B1-O-301

This book, signed by the artist and dated 1858, is titled *Skizzenbilder aus dem Liebstall und der Privat-Gestüten Sr. Magestat des Konigs von Würtemberg*. It contains forty-nine original watercolor portraits, several enhanced with gouache, of the Arabian horses of the famed Weil Stud of King Wilheim I of Würtemberg. A passionate breeder of Arabian horses, King Wilheim I founded his stud in 1817, and sent his emissaries throughout Egypt and the Near East in search of bloodstock. The Weil Stud later became the Marbach State Stud of Germany and the bloodlines of these horses represent the oldest continuously recorded Arabian pedigrees in existence.

These charming portraits by F. Keutzer depict the horses of the Weil Stud in a variety of poses: some are in the stables; some are being ridden; and others are depicted in desert scenes reflecting the homelands of their origins.



The stallion, Bairacter (above), imported from the desert in 1817, and his son, Amurath (below), founded a sire line that is extant today.





Various pages from the book of  
Original Sketches of the Arabian  
Horses of the King of Würtemberg  
Germany  
F. Keutzer  
1858  
Watercolor on paper, gouache  
H: 30.2 cm, W: 37.5 cm, H: 4.0 cm (closed)  
Emile Hermès Collection  
EH-00-B1-0-301



### 342 Mohort Demonstrating His Stud

Juliusz Kossak  
1858  
Oil on canvas  
H: 55.0 cm, W: 80.5 cm  
National Museum of Warsaw  
183757

Juliusz Kossak (1824-1899), a Polish painter distinguished for his superb historical and military paintings, is also widely known for his masterful works portraying horses. He was especially talented in depicting the details of their conformation, movement, and individuality, thus his work is an invaluable resource on the Arabian horses of Poland during the nineteenth century.

Like several works by Kossak, this painting depicts a scene from a poem by Wincenty Pol. The poem extols the Polish noble Szymon Mohort who became famous on the battlefields on the outskirts of the Polish Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century. In this scene, the aged Mohort is displaying the Arabian horses of his stud to members of the Polish aristocracy, including Prince Józef Poniatowski. Kossak portrays the horses on the wide expanse of the steppe, and beautifully depicts their natural interaction. The visiting nobles are also mounted on fine Arabian horses.

### 343 Horsewoman

Juliusz Kossak  
1868  
Oil on canvas  
H: 74.3 cm, W: 63.0 cm  
National Museum of Warsaw  
MP 1999

Equestrian portraits of the Polish aristocracy were a specialty of Juliusz Kossak and illustrate the preference of the nobility for purebred Arabians as their mounts. This woman, riding sidesaddle, appears to be setting out for a hunt. Her horse, a dapple-grey Arabian of noble bearing, is depicted prancing slightly as the rider holds him in check. This portrait is an example of one of Kossak's few oil paintings, as he is best known for his exceptional use of watercolor as a medium.



### 344 Henri de Valois Fleeing Poland

Artur Grottger

1860

Oil on canvas

H: 100.5 cm, W: 158.7 cm

National Museum of Warsaw

35754

King Henri de Valois was the successor to King Sigismund II Augustus, the first European to establish a stud for the breeding of purebred Arabians. Ruling Poland only briefly, King Henri fled in 1574 to claim the French throne after the death of his brother, Charles IX. The two principal horses in this painting have distinct Arabian characteristics and, according to tradition, King Henri chose a purebred Arabian from the stud of his predecessor King Sigismund II to make his escape. The Arabians in Poland of this time came primarily from the Ottoman Empire, and the saddle blanket and tasseled bridle and breastplate of the grey horse illustrate a strong Ottoman influence.

Inspired by Paul Delaroche's history paintings, Artur Grottger painted this work in Vienna after graduating from the local Academy of Fine Arts. Depicting the secret journey at night, Grottger expertly combines the light from the glow of torches with that of the moonlight to heighten the sense of tension and drama.



### 345 Equestrian Portrait of Aleksandra Tykla

Juliusz Kossak

1864

Watercolor on paper

H: 54.9 cm, W: 42.2 cm

National Museum of Warsaw

3899

This equestrian portrait in a landscape depicts Aleksandra Tykla riding a bay Arabian stallion. The pose of the horse is similar to many seen in the paintings of Juliusz Kossak, as the stallion is prancing in a collected pose with ears laid back, and mouth slightly open in resistance to the bit. This stallion displays many ideal Arabian characteristics, including an arched neck, smooth body, and beautiful head with large eyes and small ears.





### 347 Study of Prince Roman Sanguszko in Sławuta

Juliusz Kossak

Woodcut engraved by K. Przykorski  
based on a watercolor reproduced in  
"Tygodnik Ilustrowany"

1872

H: 16.7 cm, W: 25.2 cm

National Museum of Warsaw  
97991

The Sanguszko family owned vast lands at Slavuta (Sławuta), located in present-day Ukraine, and bred horses there beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. Prince Hieronymus Sanguszko (1743-1812) recognized the importance of Arabian blood in improving the horses of the stud and dispatched an equerry in 1803 to acquire Arabian horses from the desert. His grandson, Prince Roman Sanguszko, continued the tradition of breeding Arabians and is depicted here among the mares and foals of the historic Sławuta Stud. Known for their exceptional quality and beauty, the horses from Sławuta were highly-regarded throughout Europe and exhibited at World Expositions in Paris where they garnered gold medals.

### 346 Kazimierz Łubieński with his Daughter Emily on Horses

Juliusz Kossak

1856

Watercolor on paper

H: 49.5 cm, W: 42.0 cm

National Museum of Warsaw

Rys. Pol. 3759

This charming portrait depicts a man and his daughter during an outing on horseback. The father, Kazimierz Łubieński, is riding a handsome bay stallion, while the black horse ridden by his daughter, Emily, appears to be a mare. The details seen in the watercolors of Juliusz Kossak reveal much about the lifestyle and fashions of the Polish nobility, as well as their choice of horses.





### 348 Count Adam Potocki on Horse

Juliusz Kossak

1872

Watercolor engraved by K. Przykorski

on paper

H: 71.0 cm, W: 60.0 cm

National Museum of Warsaw

Rys. Pol. 5777

This engraving of a Kossak watercolor depicts Count Adam Potocki riding an Arabian horse. Members of the Potocki family, related to the Sanguszko's by marriage, inherited some of the Arabian horses from Sławuta and became one of several multi-generational families of the Polish aristocracy known for their Arabian horses. The Arabian horse portrayed is of exceptional classic type, with a beautiful head and harmonious proportions.



### 349 Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau

Antoine Baron Gros

1830, blind stamped by Ritter and

Goupil, Paris

Chalk lithograph on creamy wove paper

H: 57.5 cm, W: 47.5 cm (image)

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

Antoine Baron Gros (1771-1835) was one of the artists who accompanied General Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt, and his subsequent work was inspirational to many painters that followed. This lithograph portrays Napoleon I mounted on an Arabian stallion at the Battle of Eylau in Prussia.





### 350 Arab Warriors – Return from a Fantasia

Eugène Fromentin

1861

Oil on canvas

H: 119.0 cm, W: 97.0 cm

Carnegie Museum of Art

55.40

In this painting, Eugène Fromentin captures the sense of triumph and excitement of a group of mounted horsemen returning from a fantasia. Inspired by cavalry attacks, this traditional North African equestrian performance involves a group of riders lining up, galloping in formation to a pre-determined point, and firing their rifles in unison. This scene, one of many depicted by Fromentin from his time in Algeria, shows two riders on grey horses leading the group, one holding a flag aloft, and the other firing a gun. A pair of sighthounds flank the riders and spectators watch the procession from either side of the painting. The sea may be seen in the distant background, suggesting the fantasia may have taken place near the beach.

### 351 An Arabian Horse

Théodore Géricault

1821, printed by Hullmandel, published

by Rodwell and Martin, London

Chalk lithograph on white wove paper

H: 45.0 cm, W: 55.0 cm (unframed)

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

This rare lithograph from the work of the celebrated French artist Théodore Géricault depicts a tender moment between a Mamluk and his horse. Géricault, a student of Carle Vernet, was a highly influential painter and one of the pioneers of the Romantic Movement. He had a passionate love for horses and his depictions of the Arabian horse are powerful and compelling.



### 352 Aurend-Zeb (Etalon)

Hippolyte Lalaisse

1850, published by Avanzo, Paris

Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper

H: 42.0 cm, W: 51.5 cm

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

The French artist Hippolyte Lalaisse (1812-84) first began depicting Arabian horses when he studied under the famous Napoleonic battle painter Charlet. Lalaisse was known throughout his career for military and equine painting, and illustrated many books, including *La Connaissance générale du Cheval*, an 1861 work by Eugène Gayot which documented the equine knowledge of the time.



353 Arabian Horse of the  
Abdiar Strain

c. 1860, German  
Colored chalk lithograph on wove paper  
H: 23.3 cm, W: 32.4 cm (unframed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme



354 Hadjar

Victor Adam  
c. 1850, printed by Godard, published by  
Tessari, Paris  
Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
H: 42.0 cm, W: 57.0 cm (unframed  
sheet)  
H: 32.8 cm, W: 40.5 cm (image)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme



355 Choá

Victor Adam  
c. 1850, printed by Godard, published by  
Tessari, Paris  
Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
H: 42.0 cm, W: 57.0 cm (unframed  
sheet)  
H: 32.8 cm, W: 40.5 cm (image)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme



### 356 Abou Bekr

Alfred de Dreux

1859, lithographed by Barque, printed by Lemercier, published by Goupil, Paris  
Hand-colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper, three-dimensionally heightened with egg white

H: 63.5 cm, W: 81.0 cm (unframed)

H: 49.0 cm, W: 55.0 cm (image)

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

Alfred de Dreux (1810-60) produced some of the most lavish and elegant depictions of the Arabian horse in existence. A painter to the Royal Court of France, de Dreux portrayed many horses from the royal stables, often with Nubian riders and grooms. This portrait of a magnificent bay stallion is from the series "Chevaux à main."

### 357 Omar

Alfred de Dreux

1859, lithographed by Barque, printed by Lemercier, published by Goupil, Paris  
Hand-colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper, three-dimensionally heightened with egg white

H: 63.5 cm, W: 81.0 cm (unframed)

H: 49.0 cm, W: 55.0 cm (image)

Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

This lithograph from the series "Chevaux à main" depicts an Arabian stallion of exceptional beauty as he leaps forward in an attempt to escape the control of his groom. The horses portrayed by Alfred de Dreux, and this image in particular, have become the embodiment of the ideal Arabian for many horse breeders around the world.





### 358 La Lutte

Alfred de Dreux

1859, lithographed by Durand, printed by Lemercier, published by Goupil, Paris  
Hand-colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper, three-dimensionally heightened with egg white

H: 43.5 cm, W: 53.5 (unframed)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

This lithograph, number 25 of the series "Chevaux de selle et d'attelage" is a dramatic depiction of a galloping Arabian being bitten by a horse at its side. Alfred de Dreux has skillfully captured the power and strength of the horses, as well as the pain and anguish of the white horse as it is attacked.



### 359 In the Stables

Juliusz Kossak

1866

Watercolor on paper

H: 39.0 cm, W: 45.0 cm  
National Museum of Warsaw  
Rys. Pol. 4414

This watercolor depicts a groom bringing grain to two horses in a stable. One is a white stallion that appears to be a purebred Arabian of fine quality. He is wearing a saddle embellished with embroidered cloth and

inset with stones, along with a matching breastplate and crupper strap. The style of the saddle and tack are similar to that used by the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. The second horse in the painting, a chestnut behind the stallion, does not reflect the same nobility and is likely not a purebred Arabian. His tack appears to support this conclusion, since it is simple and not decorated.



### 360 A Dark Bay Stallion Held by an Arab Groom in an Encampment

George Henry Laporte

1849

Oil on canvas

H: 48.0 cm, W: 61.0 cm

Orientalist Museum, Doha  
OM 16

George Henry Laporte, son of the artist John Laporte, was a nineteenth century painter best known for his portrayals of animals, particularly in the genre of sporting art. His portrait of a bay Arabian stallion reflects an understanding of the sense of trust and fellowship that characterized the relationship between the Arabs and their horses. Free of any restraint, the stallion prances willingly to his groom to be bridled. While one ear is cocked, perhaps listening to the people and animals on the other side of the tent, the horse has direct eye contact with his groom. In turn, the groom's outstretched hand suggests the moment just before he reaches up to touch the horse and bridle him. The details of the horse's conformation imply that this is a portrait, and that Laporte used a living Arabian stallion as his model. To complete this traditional scene of an Arab groom with his horse, Laporte has painted a background which conveys the sense of majesty and serenity of the desert.

H.A.

### 361-364 The Caroussel

Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker  
1846, published by Autenrieth, Stuttgart  
Chalk lithograph on tinted paper, hand-colored and highlighted with gold  
H: 47.0 cm, W: 60 cm (unframed sheet)  
H: 33.5 cm, W: 46 cm (image size)  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

The Caroussel was ridden in 1846 at an elaborate Oriental/ Occidental tournament to celebrate the wedding of His Royal Highness Crown Prince of Württemberg (later King Karl I of Württemberg) to Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Olga Nicolajewna, the daughter of the Russian Czar. The purebred Arabian horses ridden in the tournament were all imported from the Arabian desert or bred by the Royal Stud of Weil.

These Caroussel prints were commissioned by Privy Councillor Knight of Hackländer as a wedding gift to the royal couple. He chose Carl Kurtz and Johann Baptist Zwecker, two of the

most famous equine artists of the time, to portray the tournament. Carl Kurtz (1817-1887) studied art both in Stuttgart and at the Vienna Academy of Arts and was awarded the Legion of Honour by King Wilhelm I of Württemberg. Johann Baptist Zwecker (1814-1876), who illustrated many classical works of literature as well as painting portraits and horses, studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt and the Düsseldorf Art Academy.





### 365 An Arab Horseman at the Gallop

Eugène Delacroix  
1840-50  
Oil on canvas  
H: 54.0 cm, W: 45.1 cm  
Orientalist Museum, Doha  
OM 1

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) is regarded as the founder of the French Romantic School of painting. His ability to express movement and emotion were embraced as prime elements of

this genre and his influence is reflected in the work of generations of painters.

Delacroix's travels to Morocco and Algeria provided tremendous inspiration for his creative achievements. He wrote in his journal, "I began to make something tolerable of my African journey only when I had forgotten the trivial details and remembered nothing but the striking and poetic side of the subject. Up to that time, I had been haunted by this passion for accuracy that most people mistake for truth."<sup>1</sup>

Delacroix painted more than one hundred scenes inspired by the time he spent in North Africa, and remained haunted by his experience there. This body of work includes many portrayals of Arabian and Barb horses expressing their characteristic nobility and courage.

In this painting, the tension in the rider's face, the sword in his hands, and the unsheathed saber on the ground, create a sense that the final moment is near for the enemy. The horse echoes the rider's focus with the turn of its head and shared attention toward the unseen foe, yet Delacroix evokes the dramatic outcome rather than expressing it directly through emphatic illustration. The dynamic rhythm of wavy lines in this painting, along with the intensity of colors, projects the inner dramatics typical of romanticism and exoticism.

H.A.

<sup>1</sup> Delacroix E. *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*. London, 1951. P. 210



### 366 An Arab Caravan

Eugène Fromentin

1857

Oil on panel

H: 48.9 cm, W: 99.7 cm

Orientalist Museum, Doha

OM 32

Attracted to the rising school of Orientalism while living in Paris, Eugène Fromentin traveled to Algeria three times during his life, beginning in 1846 when he was still a young man. A talented writer as well as a painter, he described the allure of this empty landscape in his book *Between Sea and Sahara*, “The vast silence of the desert with its echoing sound is transformed poetically into the expanse of the mind and the echoing sounds become the memories which rise up from the recent and distant past.”<sup>1</sup>

Fromentin was heavily influenced by Delacroix, and both painters felt compelled to experience their subjects in their natural surroundings. In this painting, Fromentin brilliantly captures the grandeur of a caravan on the move, with its caparisoned horses ridden by proud nomads holding their tribal pennants high, and brightly-colored camel litters carrying the women. The impressive size of the caravan is suggested by the dust rising in the background, just as the sky suggests the vastness of the desert. The magnificent white stallion is the sole horse not under saddle in the painting, and is obviously a treasured horse for the tribe. He is depicted in a pose Fromentin often used for his horses – tightly collected and dancing in place, with weight balanced on the haunches rather than the forehand.

H.A.

<sup>1</sup> Fromentin E. *Between Sea and Sahara*. New York. 2004. P. XVI



### 367 Notables on Mehari Camels Proceeding to a Wedding

Vincenzo Marinelli

1878

Oil on canvas

H: 54.5 cm, W: 106.0 cm

Orientalist Museum, Doha

OM 47

Vincenzo Marinelli is one of many Orientalist artists who traveled to Egypt. He was greatly favored by the Khedive Said Pasha, ruler of Egypt, who engaged him for numerous painting commissions as well as to decorate apartments belonging to the royal family. Said Pasha rose to power in 1854 after the death of one of the greatest collectors of Arabian horses in history, Abbas Pasha I.

It was the fashion of the day for Egyptian nobles to own high-class dromedaries known as Meharis, as they were superb riding camels and could easily travel as fast as horses during long journeys in the desert. Abbas Pasha I, for example, was known to ride these camels when he went to visit his stables in the desert. Like the Arabian horse, the Meharis were prized throughout the desert for their speed and stamina and were never used as beasts of burden like other camel breeds, but only for riding, racing, or warfare. Mehari camels were highly coveted by nobles and tribal leaders throughout North Africa and Arabia as symbols of wealth and status.

It is likely that Marinelli witnessed this peaceful journey across the desert to the wedding, or was a member of the traveling party, as he painted so many works for Khedive and his family.

FF

### 368 Arab with Groom

After Victor Adam

19th century

Oil on canvas

H: 45.7 cm, W: 52.7 cm

Thomas A. Courtenay

The art of lithography in the nineteenth century enabled a wide audience to appreciate depictions of Arabian horses. Many renowned artists used these images as inspiration for their paintings. The celebrated French artist Théodore Géricault, for example, based several of his works on the lithography of Carle Vernet.

This lovely painting of an Arabian stallion and his groom was inspired by a similar lithograph of Victor Adam, who was well-known for his portrayals of Arabian horses.



### 369 The Bedouin

Edwin Bogucki

Bronze

L: 91.4 cm, H: 73.7 cm, W: 45.7 cm

Collection of the Artist

This contemporary bronze sculpture by Edwin Bogucki reflects the classic style of the animalier sculptors of the nineteenth century. Bogucki portrays the power and grace of an Arabian horse at full gallop, ridden by a confident Bedouin warrior, sword in hand. Details of the sculpture reflect Bedouin skills in horsemanship, such as their expert control of their mounts without the use of a bit.



### 370 Arab Warriors

Adolph Schreyer

Oil on canvas

H: 58.4 cm, W: 95.3 cm

International Museum of the Horse

Donated by the Purebred Arabian Trust

2008.001.150

Horses were a favorite subject of the German painter Adolph Schreyer (1828-99). His travels provided inspiration for much of his work, and he became familiar with the horses of the Near East and North Africa during the time spent in Syria, Egypt and Algeria. He often depicted groups of Arab horsemen, primarily in North Africa, and for this reason many of the horses he portrayed were Barbs rather than Arabs. This painting shows a group of Arab horsemen halting in the desert. Their attention is directed toward a rider, perhaps a scout, who is pointing to something in the distance. The flag held by a horseman in the background suggests the group may be prepared for battle rather than the hunt.



### 371 L'Accolade

P.J. Mène

1851

Bronze

L: 50.8 cm, H: 31.8

International Museum of the Horse

Donated by the Purebred Arabian Trust

2008.001.142

Pierre-Jules Mène (1810- 79)

was the French sculptor who was largely responsible for popularizing the realistic portrayal of animals in bronze during the nineteenth century. The sculptors that produced such work became known as animaliers and

their works were fashionable during this period as décor in large numbers of private homes. This bronze by Mène is one of his most famous, and depicts the Arabian horses Tachiani and Nedjebé in a typical scene of interaction between horses.



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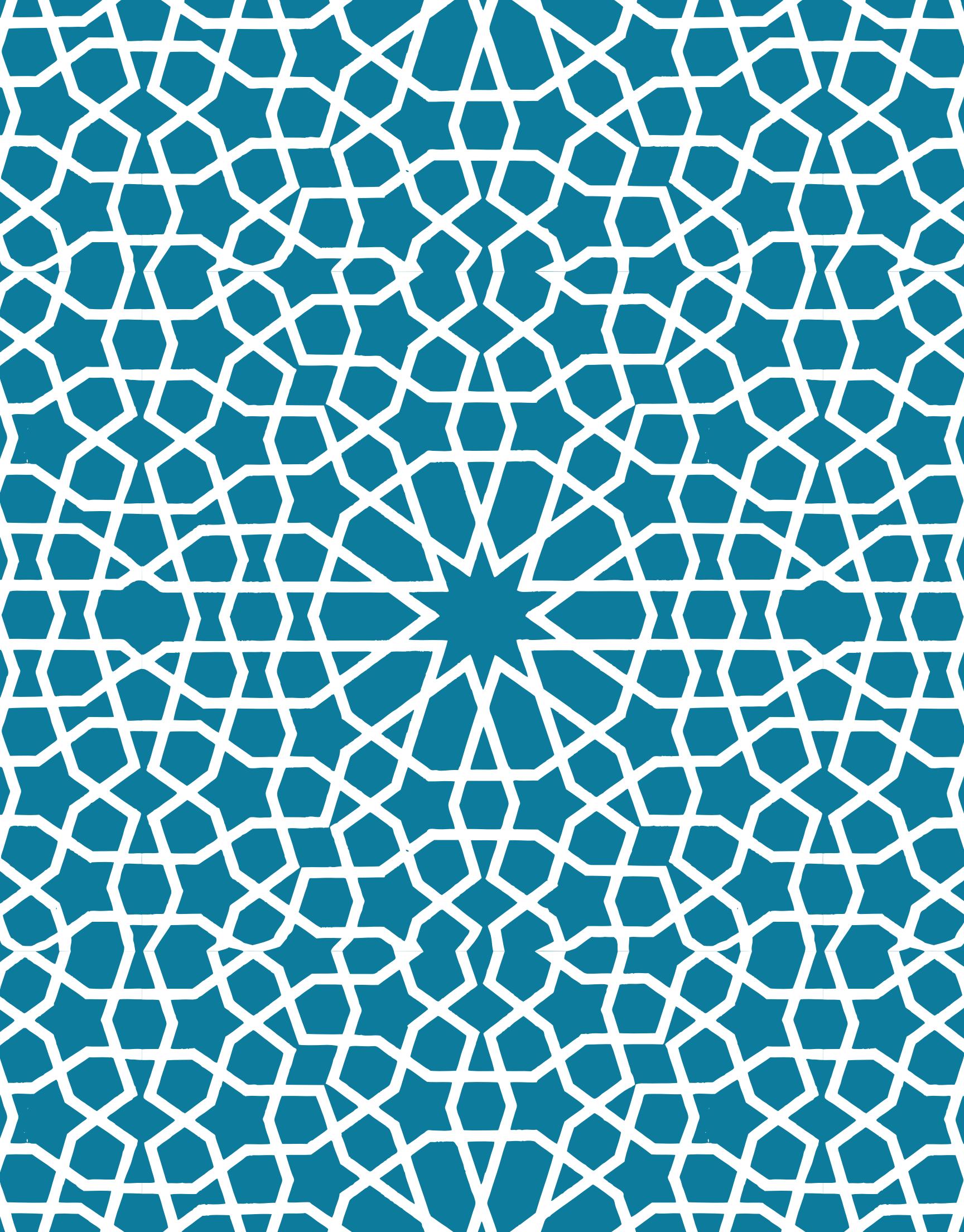
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# هبّة من الصحراء

## فن و تاريخ و تراث الخيول العربية الأصيلة



ABOVE:

**Horse Head Finial**  
Qaryat al-Fau, south-central Saudi Arabia  
Early 1<sup>st</sup> century  
Gilt bronze  
King Saud University Archeological Museum

ON THE COVER:

**Akerf**  
Victor Adam  
c. 1850  
Colored chalk lithograph on tinted paper  
Collection of Dr. Karin Thieme

Presented by the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation  
The Kentucky Horse Park and the International Museum of the Horse